

# The Dynamics of Parent-Child Relationships

*By*

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## INTRODUCTION

**T**HIS BOOK represents an extension and development of dynamic psychology, that is, the psychology of motivation, adjustment, and integration. If the author's earlier book, *The Dynamics of Human Adjustment*,<sup>1</sup> can be thought of as presenting the basic principles of dynamic psychology, the present book is more in the nature of an applied dynamic psychology, that is, the application of dynamic principles to a particular field—in this case, the field of parent-child relationships. Dynamic psychology can and should be applied to every area of human relationships—education, industry, government, for instance—and as conscious and unconscious motivational factors become better understood in every phase of society a solution to the age-old problem of control of man's passions will be accelerated.

This book is intended for use by counselors and psychotherapists who work in child guidance and in parent education and psychotherapy. It may appropriately be used as a supplement to and as collateral reading with the author's *The Dynamics of Human Adjustment*.

The first chapter discusses emotional security as a basis for favorable personality development. Succeeding chapters deal with the variety of parent-child relationships which result from the several dynamic personality trends in parents. This book is posited on the general thesis that parent-child relationships are determined primarily by the attitudes of parents and that these attitudes spring from the dynamic forces within the parents' personalities. The child is only secondarily re-

<sup>1</sup> New York: D. Appleton-Century Company, 1946.

sponsible for determining the character of parent-child relationships. It is only after the parents' original attitudes have had their effect in modeling even slightly the direction of a child's personality that the child emerges as an independent force in determining the parent-child relationships. A mother may be driven by unreconciled hostile trends carrying over from childhood. In the beginning her child is the helpless recipient of these hostile attitudes and feelings. As he reacts to them with resistant, demanding, or submissive attitudes of his own, he in turn contributes to the pattern that parent-child relationships will take.

Chapters II to X discuss various aberrations of parental attitudes which lead to unfortunate parent-child relationships. These deviations of parental attitudes tend to fall into two main groups corresponding to the two fundamental responses of love and hate. Chapter II treats of those parent-child relationships which are based on parental hate and hostility. It may seem trite to state that children may be both loved and hated by their parents; but from this simple fact grow the variations of parental attitudes, with their influence on the development of a child's personality. It is true that a mother may both love and hate her child. That mothers love their children needs no proof. That they may hate them is less readily recognized and admitted, although most parents would admit that there are occasions when their children irritate them beyond measure. It would almost seem as though the parents' attitudes were an algebraic resultant of certain quantities of plus and minus feelings. When we say that a parent loves a child, we must admit that there are times when negative and hostile feelings arise but that they come less frequently or with less strength than the feelings of love, and consequently the feelings of love have the upper hand. Conversely, the mother who shows a balance of hostility toward her child will usually have periods when she feels kindly disposed toward him. However, the matter is not simply an algebraic resultant of possible forces, for the expressions of



love and hate intertwine in countless ways, and typically a parent's attitude is an ambivalent one which may alternate between positive and negative feelings. Consequently, when in the subsequent analysis parents' attitudes are described as positive or negative it should be recognized that there is involved an element of arbitrariness. It is only the exceptional case, in which one feeling is paramount, that can be clearly described in these terms. In general we speak of parents who have a balance of negative hostile feelings toward a child as *rejecting* the child. When positive love tendencies have the upper hand, we speak of the parents as *accepting* the child. Then there is a third group, in which the attitude expressed is one that alternates and involves both acceptance and rejection.

The matter is complicated by the fact that often these feelings are repressed and exist only in the form of unconscious residual tensions and impulses, which, however, may force themselves through to some kind of outer expression. The matter is still further complicated by the disguised way in which feelings may express themselves. The token of affection or the expression of interest may cloak hostility and may produce pain or restriction, while a slap may be actually a disguised love pat.

Chapter III, which deals with parental overindulgence, includes a combination of two parental attitudes which, while not necessarily always confluent, seem in many cases to operate jointly to produce parental overindulgence. On the one hand, there is parental *narcissism*, represented by the married woman who is starved for love and uses a child selfishly as a way of satisfying erotic needs. On the other hand, there is parental *masochism*. The overindulgent mother sacrifices herself for her child and permits the child to dominate her and to impose on her. Often hostility and the fear of her own aggression create guilt and, in order to propitiate and assuage her guilt, she becomes overindulgent and permits the child to dominate and often to intimidate her.

Chapter IV discusses overprotection, which is a response to parental anxiety.

Chapter V, which deals with overauthority and overstrictness by parents, brings together at least two distinct personality trends. In the first place there is the dominating, authoritative, masculine mother. Her dominating attitudes may be expressions of hostility, but they may also be an expression of love. Whichever the underlying feeling, this parent has a need to control and dominate, in contrast with the yielding and submissive parent described in Chapter III. In addition, parents may show compulsive and obsessional trends characterized by overzealous strictness and rigidity in maintaining rules and system. Frequently with these parents there is a projection of repression and they require of their children the same repression of natural impulses that characterize their own attitudes. While these diverse trends do not always go together, they are found together frequently enough to be described in a single chapter.

Chapter VI, dealing with projection of parental ambition and parental overdependence, presents clear-cut and frequently observed syndromes.

Chapter XI considers the essentials of good parent-child relationships. The final chapter (XII) discusses the problems and methods of parent education and parent psychotherapy.

Each chapter attempts to accomplish three things. First, there is presented a description of the ways in which a given parental attitude exhibits itself. Second, the influence of this parental attitude on the child is discussed, with a description of the child's reaction to the parental attitude and the way in which the child's behavior and eventually his personality are modified in response to the parental attitude. Third, dynamic factors which may underlie the parental attitude are discussed. There are, on the one hand, immediate factors in the family situation which lead a parent to adopt one attitude or another and, on the other hand, deeper dynamic and unconscious factors in the personality structures of the parents

which help to determine in a very real way their adjustment to present difficulties and frustrations.

The annotated bibliography following the text represents an exhaustive canvass of the literature and the author's selection of the titles which in his judgment represent the most important contributions in this field at the time this is written. The bibliography is frankly selective.

The material in this book is gleaned largely from the efforts of child guidance workers and represents in the main the conclusions reached from the study of individual cases. In general, observational and experimental studies have contributed less than have case studies to our knowledge of parent-child relationships, and the few experimental studies which have been conducted in this area are lacking in insight because the experimenters have been limited in their contacts with the subject matter of their investigations. It is remarkable that the understanding of the dynamics of parent-child relationships should be such a recent development. Freud and his followers, although they certainly laid the groundwork, emphasized fixed innate or instinctual origins of personality rather than functional origins that lie in relationships within the family. Although the realization that parent-child relationships have a profound influence on the personality development of the child seemed to take form spontaneously in many quarters at about the same time, one can trace the formulation of some of the concepts to the work of the Institute of Child Guidance in New York City and to the speeches and writings of David M. Levy around 1929. Levy's most recent book, *Maternal Overprotection*,<sup>2</sup> is a systematic presentation of the data and conclusions reached in his earlier studies. My study of accepted and rejected children and of children of dominating and of submissive parents, *The Psychology of Parent-Child Relationships*,<sup>3</sup> still presents the only systematic evidence of the nature and outcomes of constructive parent-child relationships.

<sup>2</sup> New York: Columbia University Press, 1943.

<sup>3</sup> New York: D. Appleton-Century Company, 1939

In several of the chapters of this book reference will be made to the influence of the parents in determining the sex characteristics of children—the masculinity of a boy, for instance, or the femininity of a girl. These relationships between parent and child are presented with full realization that they imply a stereotype of sex role that may not accord with reality. In recent years there has been much discussion of sex character, and largely as a result of anthropological reports a belief has sprung up that there is no innate biologically determined sex character, but that sex character is a product of culture. However, the older belief that man is innately dominant, forceful, aggressive, and protecting and that woman is passive, yielding, gentle, and nurturing is stubbornly persistent.

Probably the most dramatic anthropological report providing evidence as to the mutability of sex characteristics is Margaret Mead's study<sup>4</sup> of three primitive societies. Both sexes among the Arapesh show feminine characteristics of gentleness, sympathy, and lack of aggressiveness. Among the Mundugumor both sexes are violent, aggressive, and competitive. In another tribe, the Tchambuli, the sex characteristics are the reverse of what they are in our society, with the women occupying positions of power and authority and shouldering the responsibilities of providing for the family while the men occupy themselves with artistic and other nonessential activities.

On the other hand Seward has demonstrated that aggressiveness and dominance are functions of the distribution of the male sex hormone and that aggressive behavior can be produced in females by androgen injection.<sup>5</sup>

The best opinion seems to be that sex character is a combination of the biological and the cultural, each exerting its influence in varying proportions. Briffault has summed up by

<sup>4</sup> Margaret Mead, *Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies*. New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1930.

<sup>5</sup> G. H. Seward, *Sex and the Social Order*. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1946.

stating, "There can be no doubt that a large proportion of the secondary sexual characters, both psychical and physical, which have been set down as biological, are in reality the effects of the operation of the social circumstances obtaining in a patriarchal order. At the same time it cannot be assumed that sexual differentiation is devoid of biological foundation,"<sup>6</sup> and Deutsch states in her treatise on the *Psychology of Women*, "A great part of the deeply rooted hereditary acquisitions, although modified from the outside by cultural and educational influences strongly varying from individual to individual, and although reshaped by the tremendous differentiation of psychic life, has been preserved in woman's reproductive functions."<sup>7</sup>

Two points of fact that are relevant, however, should be added. One is that in our own society there is a definite and well-defined sex character that not only serves as the ideal but is actually descriptive of men and women as they are. Terman and Miles summarize their studies of the relation of sex to personality as follows: "The males directly or indirectly manifest the greater self-assertion and aggressiveness; they express more hardihood and fearlessness, and more roughness of manners, language and sentiments. The females represent themselves as more compassionate and sympathetic, more timid, more fastidious and aesthetically sensitive, more emotional in general (or at least more expressive of the four emotions considered), severer moralists, yet admit in themselves more weaknesses in emotional control and (less noticeably) in physique."<sup>8</sup> The other point is that around this typical picture there is great variation. Men vary in masculinity, some even carrying the passivity, gentleness, and submissiveness ordinarily thought to be characteristic of women,

<sup>6</sup> R. Briffault, *The Mothers*, p. 313. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1931.

<sup>7</sup> Helene Deutsch, *The Psychology of Women*, Vol. II, p. 15. New York: Grune and Stratton, 1945.

<sup>8</sup> L. M. Terman and C. C. Miles, *Sex and Personality*, p. 448. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1936.

while women vary in femininity, some even "wearing the pants" and showing typical masculine traits of dominance, assertiveness, and forcefulness.

In view of the fact that there is a well-defined stereotype of sex characteristics in our society both in the ideal and in actuality, and in spite of the fact that there is considerable variation around these typical patterns and that they are to a considerable extent culturally determined, this book will discuss determinants of sex characteristics in terms of parent-child relationships. It must be recognized that when a child identifies with father or mother, he is identifying with that particular father or mother and with the sex characteristics that either possesses and not with some ideal man or woman, although it must be admitted that the ideal as well as the actual has an important role to play in character formation.

A book which deals as forthrightly as this one does with problems which are loaded emotionally for nearly everyone may arouse anxiety or guilt in anyone who is brought face to face with the fact that he may have been subjected to unfortunate influences in his own family life in childhood, or who realizes that he has harbored deleterious attitudes toward his own children. Many persons need to learn that the fact of unfortunate early experiences does not irrevocably bind them down or give cause for hopelessness on the one hand, or relieve them of responsibility for themselves on the other. Individuals who for the first time realize that they were rejected or overprotected as children need to learn to accept these facts (and themselves) with less guilt or with less feeling of inferiority. Nearly everyone needs to be reassured that it is always possible to arrange situations that will permit growth and learning away from and out of the unfortunate experiences of the past and toward greater strength, independence, and maturity.

The studies that have led up to this book indicate that the development of the child's personality is closely related to his relationships with his parents. This is a conclusion of the

utmost importance. It means that one must consider parent-child relationships not only with respect to their influence in causing mental and emotional disorders and psychopathic states but also in connection with the development of normality, leadership, and genius. It means that attention must be given increasingly to the problems of parent-child relationships even to their most minute details, for it is in the small and subtle aspects of these relationships that the security of the child develops.

The essence of parent-child relations, it must be emphasized, lies more in how a parent *feels* than in what a parent *does*. If a parent truly loves his child, considerable departure from recommended practices in the handling of the child will not lead to unfavorable personality development. Helping to influence parents in what they *do* is the province of parent education and has long been understood; helping to influence parents in how they *feel*, less well understood, is the province of parent psychotherapy. Both parent education and parent psychotherapy are important; but for the cultivation of constructive parent-child relationships and the development of desirable child personality, influencing parent feeling is more important than influencing parent behavior.





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# The Dynamics of Parent-Child Relationships



# *I*

## THE MEANING OF EMOTIONAL SECURITY

ANY DISCUSSION of the need for security must go back to the basic fact of prolonged human infancy. Of all mammals, the human infant is the most helpless and requires the longest period of care and protection. A newborn baby would very shortly die if it were not cared for, and the normal arrangement of civilized society is that this care shall be given by the parents who are responsible for bringing it into the world. The necessity for this care continues over several years, not only in infancy but also through childhood. As a matter of fact, in our own society adolescents are still to a large degree helpless and unable to make their way in the complicated world of today, and it is actually true that some high school and even college students would have difficulty in surviving were they not given continued care and protection by their elders.

### *BASES OF SECURITY*

Security in its broad sense depends on a stable and secure environment which includes not only the home but the whole of society. At the present time we are in desperate need of a stable world order. We in the United States are a relatively stable nation and society, but large masses of the world's population cringe in uncertainty and fear, the results of which are devastating to the individual's security. Security for the developing child centers around the home and family. Society should be so ordered that each family has financial and social

security. Each family should be secure from the threat of want and deprivation, from attacks from without, and from invasion of the privacy of the home.

However, such an environment need not, and even should not, be too rigid. If the environment is too rigid and undeviating, the child fails to learn to adjust himself to the varying conditions of life. A good home should provide a balance between stability and uniformity on the one hand, and variation and breadth of experience on the other.

Still sharper focus, however, can be given to an understanding of the security of the child by pointing to the kind of parents the child possesses. Emotional security during childhood depends basically on the relationship engendered by the child's care and protection for which parents must take the responsibility. It is on this relationship that the child's comforts and continued existence depend. The emotional attitudes of parents toward a child are far more important in giving a child security than the possession of a fine home, with cleanliness, comfort, and convenience. To give the growing child security parents should be stable, happy individuals, free from worry and anxiety, who have a task in life and a respected place in the community. Financial and social insecurity can be communicated to the child only through anxiety on the part of the parents. Parents can go through severe hardships and even move from place to place, but if they are courageous and meet life's problems competently, the child has a good guarantee of emotional security.

#### *SECURITY MORE BASIC THAN ADEQUACY*

The attitude a person takes toward himself grows out of the attitude which parents showed toward him when he was little. Parents who are serene and who show confidence in a child will engender in that child similar serenity and confidence in himself. Similarly, parents who show anxiety about a child will give him feelings of insecurity and inferiority. Courage and self-reliance in an individual stem originally

from the fact that his parents provided security for him while he was growing up. This security means, on the one hand, that the parents did not push the child at too early an age into responsibilities and obligations for which his development did not fit him and, on the other hand, that the parents did not hedge him about with so much protection that he was not able to learn how to take care of himself. First of all, the child needs protection, and out of this protection he gathers his courage and security; but he also needs the freedom to venture into the strange and the unknown and to try his own hand at managing the various situations life presents to him. Adequacy, therefore, grows out of security already established. The child who has been denied the security of care and protection by strong parents may find it difficult to become adequate or to develop skills. It is possible to damage feelings of security when blows at adequacy are of sufficient strength and frequency. For instance, the person who continuously fails at his tasks will, in the long run, have his security undermined. But fundamentally, emotional security depends more on the support which parents give a child in his early years than on his own capacity to meet difficult situations as they arise.

#### *PERSONALITY AN OUTCOME OF PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIPS*

Recent psychological studies indicate that personality is very largely a product of the interactions between parents and child. The detailed discussion of how personality is formed as a response to parent-child relationships will be given in the succeeding pages of this book. Until recently the dynamics of the development of personality have been shrouded in obscurity, and the point of view that personality is developed mainly through early relationships with those who take care of the child has been challenged. That personality is largely a matter of biological inheritance is a point of view widely held. There are those who believe that per-

sonality is determined in large measure by physical structure, that is, by the dimensions of the physical frame.<sup>1</sup> Considerable speculation has gone on even within the last two decades as to the possible contribution of glandular secretions to personality development.<sup>2</sup> It is recognized and admitted that all these elements play a part in determining personality; but evidence seems to be accumulating that basic patterns of personality are determined mainly through the interactions of parents and child in earliest years, and that the factors which determine personality are related to the child's needs. If a child is given security by his parents, he tends to develop one kind of personality; whereas if his security is threatened either by negligence on the one hand, or by overprotection or indulgence on the other, he develops another kind of personality. These findings, which are now backed by a considerable body of clinical and experimental evidence, are among the most startling and significant in the vast range of scientific discoveries of recent years. From these new data will grow a new science and art of being a parent with the potentiality of increased influence over the personalities and reactions of growing children.

Individual differences in personality shown by children in the same family are sometimes cited as evidence against the relationship theory of personality development. It is common observation that brothers and sisters usually have widely different personalities. One child may be studious, reserved, and introverted, another may be open, social, and warm; a third may be intent, determined, and dynamic. How can children in the same family have such different personalities if personality is a product of environment? Have they not all grown up in the same family and have they not the same

<sup>1</sup> E. Kretschmer, *Physique and Character* London Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1925; W. H. Sheldon and S. S. Stevens, *The Varieties of Temperament* New York: Harper and Brothers, 1942.

<sup>2</sup> N. W. Shock, "Physiological Factors in Behavior." Chapter 19 of J. McV. Hunt, *Personality and the Behavior Disorders*, Vol. I New York: The Ronald Press, 1944. Also Flanders Dunbar, *Emotions and Bodily Change*, 3rd edition, chapter VII. New York: Columbia University Press, 1946.



father and mother? It would seem that these facts would make it equally difficult to use heredity as an explanation, because these children have come from the same reservoir of germ plasm. The fault in the argument, however, is that children growing up in the same family do not, by any means, have the same environment. The very fact that one child is part of the environment for another is sufficient to destroy the validity of the observation. When the first child comes the only other persons in the family are his parents and other grown-ups who may be family members. When the second child comes he has not only these adults as part of his environment, but also the first child. But in a still more important way parents are not the same parents to different children in the family. It would seem that parents tend to take different attitudes toward different children of the family. By venting accumulated tensions on one child these tensions are relieved, making it possible to adopt a different attitude toward another child. That is to say, for example, a parent may release the full force of his hate on one member of the family, and thereafter—on account of the satisfaction derived from this release—be free to bestow feelings of love on other members of the family. Usually the first-born is the one on whom are displaced the feelings around which there is the strongest conflict. For instance, if hostility toward one's own parent has yet to be resolved, the father or mother may displace onto the newborn first child some of this hostility, but when the second child comes along the need to displace these feelings has been taken care of and the second child may be more fully the recipient of the parents' love. Children in a family may in turn be the recipients of the parents' feelings of love, hostility, guilt, anxiety, ambition, or narcissism.

#### *SECURITY VERSUS DEMANDS OF AUTHORITY*

There is a serious conflict between the security aspects of parent-child relationships and the authority demands in them. Parents are concerned not only with giving their children

care and protection, but also with directing their development so that they may grow up to be acceptable members of the society into which they are born. These demands of care and protection may run into serious conflict with the demands of authority. Parental restraint or direction of a child's behavior may conflict with his natural wishes and inclinations. For the moment, the child is frustrated and his security is seriously threatened. He recognizes in his parents' disciplinary measures the same threat to the satisfactions of his desires that were present when at an earlier age he was threatened with lack of nourishment, with pain, exposure, or absence of companionship. For the child whose parents have been good to him and who have given him every reason to feel trust in them, these demands of authority do not produce anxiety or resistant behavior; but in those cases where parents have been careless or neglectful or have even shown their hostility toward the child, attempts at training and at disciplining him may be confusing to the child, who may mistake them for new forms of rejection, neglect, and hostility. Frequently the child has full justification for being confused, since to the extent that he is rebellious or fails to come up to standards set by his parents, he is going to be shown the impatience and the lack of acceptance by his parents that have always been the greatest threat to his sense of well-being and security. Parents of necessity cannot deal objectively with the problem of training because they themselves are emotionally involved in the relationship. This is why parents so often have difficulty in disciplining their children and run into resistance, negativism, and temper tantrums, whereas a teacher in the nursery school, approaching the same problems without being emotionally involved, often can manage the child objectively and secure remarkably favorable results. It is because the parents are emotionally involved in the relationship themselves that they have difficulty in imposing the needed authority and discipline without damaging the relationship which is the very basis of the child's security.

Mrs. A wishes to bring her son up to be courteous to others. She also wishes to be a good mother to him. On one occasion, however, when she had to use her authority and insist that Billy go to bed at seven-thirty, she heard him mutter under his breath, "You old fool." This naturally aroused Mrs. A's ire, and before she knew it she was scolding him for his impoliteness and was arbitrarily ordering him to bed. Her own anger was so marked that Billy became subdued and insisted on taking to bed with him a woolly dog that he had apparently discarded several months before. Vague fantasies flitted through his mind that his mother was mean to him, that he would like to hurt her in some way, and he wished she were dead so that he could stay up as long as he wanted to. It was as a result of similar scenes in the past that Billy muttered the remark that kindled the present scene into flame. Mrs. A's desire to bring her boy up to behave as she believes he should ran into direct conflict with her need to give him emotional security.

On the other hand, this dilemma should not be construed to mean that discipline is best carried out where there is absence of an emotional relationship. On the contrary, the best discipline is that which proceeds in a way that gives the child security and makes him want to do the things that the parents want him to do because he senses that they love him.

#### *RELATIVITY OF PARENTAL ATTITUDE*

The sex of the child may be a factor in this dispersal of parental attitude and feeling. Parents displace love or hate onto a boy or a girl according to whether these feelings in the parents represent conflicts toward their parents or toward siblings of the same or the opposite sex. A mother, for instance, may lavish on a son all the love which she earlier felt toward her own father, or she may find that her son arouses her hostility because he is the embodiment of a brother who had been her rival. Age is also a factor. Feelings toward a

child at birth may change in a few weeks. Fond feelings toward a child who is helpless and amenable to control may change and reverse themselves after the child becomes more of a personality and can assert himself negatively and can run about and become independent. The feelings toward a child may take one turn when the child is at home and close to the mother, and another when the child is away at school and shares his emotions with teachers and classmates. A mother's feelings toward a child may be steady during childhood, but she may become strangely restless and anxious when the child turns the corner into adolescence. Feelings toward a child may change when he becomes old enough to begin his emancipation from the family. Because a parent has shown overindulgence or rejection when a child was young is no reason for thinking that this attitude is a permanent one. One must look for the effects of parental attitude on a child at the time the attitude is expressed and not at some later time when these particular feelings have perhaps shifted and taken a different turn.

Parental attitudes may also be relative to the particular function involved. Some mothers may be especially rejecting or overanxious with regard to feeding. Others may wage the battle around toilet and cleanliness training. Other mothers will be specially sensitive to manifestations of sexual behavior and will repress curiosity or autoerotic practices. Others will become alarmed over the use of improper language and will suppress any obscene or sex word that may appear in the child's vocabulary. Still others will be alarmed at any display of aggression on the part of the child. Sometimes the parental attitude may be limited to a specific function, at other times the child's total self may be involved.

#### *THE STUDY OF PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIPS*

The study of parent-child relationships by any of the well-recognized psychological techniques of observation, rating, questionnaire, and interview is difficult on account of the

subtlety with which parental attitudes are expressed. A parent naturally wishes to be thought a good parent and will do what is necessary to put that complexion on his activities as a parent, at least for the observing world. A parent, like everyone else, may have an *official* self which he presents to the world and a *true* self which may often think and feel in ways that are not socially approved. All the psychological mechanisms whose purposes are to disguise and distort impulses and behavior may be brought into play in connection with attitudes which parents adopt toward their children. These defenses against unconscious motivations to reject a child or to overprotect him not only help parents to prove to the world that they are good parents, but also help the parents themselves to believe that they are doing what is expected of the good mother or father.

Some years ago the writer believed that facts concerning parent-child relationships could be easily secured by having members of his classes describe family situations with which they were intimately acquainted. He discovered that even in connection with the families that one knows best one does not often assess parental attitudes correctly. Part of the difficulty is that we are accustomed to observe the facts but tend to discount them or to minimize their significance. For instance, in one family which a student described, the child's behavior gave every sign that the child was more or less seriously rejected, although the account given would indicate that the parents were extremely fond of the child. On discussing the matter with the student, it was admitted that on occasion the father would get severely out of patience with the child and would give him a severe spanking. However, this fact was more or less discounted because it seemed to be the natural thing to do under the circumstances, and perhaps was even called for by the behavior of the child. The fact that by this action the father showed intense feelings of hatred which were very real tended to be overlooked in favor of his assertions that he was very fond of the child.

To really know the atmosphere of a family, one would have

to be in the family as an unseen observer in its most intimate moments as, for instance, when getting up in the morning, getting dressed, eating breakfast, getting the children off to school, or performing the going-to-bed rituals in the evening. In the bosom of the intimate family life true feelings will be expressed, whereas when the family is on display, one may be quite sure that only the best side will be put forth. It is for this reason that too much credence cannot be placed on statements made by parents with regard to their attitude and feelings toward a child. To the astute observer, however, a parent is almost certain to betray his real feelings, whether positive or negative, in stray remarks. One revealing sign of a parent's attitude toward a child is his tendency to praise or criticize the child to others, although the very act of praise or criticism sometimes indicates the existence of the opposite unconscious attitude.

## 2

### PARENTAL REJECTION A DENIAL OF LOVE AND AN EXPRESSION OF HATE TOWARD CHILD

**T**HAT PARENTAL REJECTION exists hardly needs to be demonstrated, yet actually there is widespread resistance to admitting this not infrequent phenomenon. Some parents will admit its existence in other, remote class levels of society but will reject the thought that it might be present within their own circle of friends. It is common to admit annoyance, even anger directed toward a child, and to pass it off as a momentary whim, a passing feeling, or a natural response to the child's bad behavior, without recognizing or admitting the deep-seated and persistent character of the feeling. It is, indeed, difficult for many persons to admit the rugged existence in themselves or in others of negative feelings toward their children because it is a threat to their own picture of themselves as decent and respectable persons. Illustrations of parental hostility and rejection can be multiplied many times over from literature and from reports of the case work of child guidance workers.

The following quotation from Butler's *The Way of All Flesh* provides an illustration from classical literature. It is the story of an incident in the childhood of the hero of the book, Ernest:

In the course of the evening they came into the drawing-room, and, as an especial treat, were to sing some of their hymns to me [the narrator], instead of saying them, so that I might hear how

nically they sang. Ernest was to choose the first hymn, and he chose one about some people who were to come to the sunset tree. I am no botanist, and do not know what kind of a tree a sunset tree is, but the words began, "Come, come, come, come to the sunset tree, for the day is past and gone." The tune was rather pretty and had taken Ernest's fancy, for he was unusually fond of music and had a sweet little child's voice which he liked using.

He was, however, very late in being able to sound a hard "c" or "k," and, instead of saying "Come," he said "Tum, tum, tum."

"Ernest," said Theobald, from his armchair in front of the fire, where he was sitting with his hands folded before him, "don't you think it would be very nice if you were to say 'come' like other people, instead of 'tum'?"

"I do say tum," replied Ernest, meaning that he had said "come"

Theobald [the father] was always in a bad temper on Sunday evening. Whether it is that they are as much bored with the day as their neighbors, or whether they are tired, or whatever the cause may be, clergymen are seldom at their best on Sunday evening, I had already seen signs that evening that my host was cross, and was a little nervous at hearing Ernest say so promptly, "I do say tum," when his papa had said he did not say it as he should.

Theobald noticed the fact that he was being contradicted in a moment. He got up from his armchair and went to the piano.

"No, Ernest, you don't," he said, "you say nothing of the kind, you say 'tum,' not 'come.' Now say 'come' after me, as I do."

"Tum," said Ernest at once; "is that better?" I have no doubt he thought it was, but it was not.

"Now, Ernest, you are not taking pains: you are not trying as you ought to do. It is high time you learned to say 'come'; why, Joey can say 'come,' can't you, Joey?"

"Yeth, I can," replied Joey, and he said something which was not far off "come."

"There, Ernest, do you hear that? There's no difficulty about it, nor shadow of difficulty. Now, take your own time, think about it, and say 'come' after me."

The boy remained silent a few seconds and then said "tum" again.

I laughed, but Theobald turned to me impatiently and said, "Please do not laugh, Overton; it will make the boy think it does not matter, and it matters a great deal", then, turning to Ernest, he said, "Now, Ernest, I will give you one more chance, and if



you don't say 'come,' I shall know that you are self-willed and naughty."

He looked very angry, and a shade came over Ernest's face, like that which comes upon the face of a puppy when it is being scolded without understanding why. The child saw well what was coming now, was frightened, and, of course, said "tum" once more.

"Very well, Ernest," said his father, catching him angrily by the shoulder. "I have done my best to save you, but if you will have it so, you will," and he lugged the little wretch, crying by anticipation, out of the room. A few minutes more and we could hear screams coming from the dining room across the hall which separated the drawing-room from the dining room, and knew that poor Ernest was being beaten.

"I have sent him up to bed," said Theobald, as he returned to the drawing-room, "and now, Christina, I think we will have the servants in to prayers," and he rang the bell for them, red-handed as he was.<sup>1</sup>

A more modern illustration is taken from *The Garretson Chronicle*. This is the story of Ralph Garretson. Having been expelled from Harvard College at the end of his second year, he comes home with unrealistic visions of becoming a writer. His hardheaded stepmother thought otherwise:

Her disapproval led to severity, and I perceived that she was my enemy.

"You apparently despise us and our ways," she said, "yet you expect us to support you."

She turned cold and dangerous. I had lived all those years with my family thoughtlessly, as boys do, taking it as the measure of my values, but now I saw a rift between us. I had been criticizing them severely and steadily—their habits and tastes and values—but I had expected them to accept my opinions with grateful respect. I had counted on mother's controlled reasonableness and felt that as long as she discussed matters objectively, all was well.

But now the taut lines of her face expressed hostility. "You may think you represent the new generation," she said, "but I haven't seen Steve or Jean acting like this. And the youngsters

<sup>1</sup> Samuel Butler, *The Way of All Flesh*, pp. 90-92. New York. Walter J. Black, 1903

won't if I can prevent it. Ralph, I really think it's too bad, this attitude of yours toward us and everything we've tried to do."<sup>2</sup>

Or from case literature one finds the following episode concerning Marie LeFevre, reported by Dr. Martha W. MacDonald:

Marie (hesitatingly). "It was in the seventh grade. A girl had a pin, just a cheap pin. I took it and my mother found out. It was just before Christmas—one week before" (she stopped).

Psychiatrist. "Don't you remember anything more?"

Marie (silence).

Psychiatrist. "Did your mother punish you?"

Marie (silence).

Psychiatrist. "How did she punish you, Marie?"

Marie (her eyes filled). "I got nothing for Christmas" (she sobbed).

Psychiatrist. "That seemed like pretty stiff punishment, didn't it? Worse than a whipping even?"

Marie. "I got that too. But I wanted roller skates, and I didn't get anything even on the tree."

(As oldest in a family of nine where Christmas is celebrated over a period of two weeks, this must have been a most painful rejection for Marie, as she was kept from sharing in the festivities.)<sup>3</sup>

But even a psychiatrist can wish to hide the true significance of the feelings behind behavior, for Dr. MacDonald states, "It was in Marie's relations with her mother that the trouble seemed chiefly to be, and the mother, in spite of being harassed, irritable, and insecure, was not really rejecting of the girl."<sup>4</sup>

Fries sums up the common reluctance to admit the reality of rejection when she says:

The problem of hostility, whether in the parent versus the child or the child versus the parent, is repugnant to all parents.

<sup>2</sup> Reprinted from *The Garretson Chronicle* by Gerald Warner Brace, by permission of W. W. Norton & Company, Inc. Copyright 1947 by Gerald Warner Brace.

<sup>3</sup> H. L. Witmer, editor, *Psychiatric Interviews with Children*, p. 196. New York: The Commonwealth Fund, 1946.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 182.

Parents put up every defense mechanism available before accepting insight on this point. Many show great antagonism when reading pamphlets on child care. In practice we hear repeatedly, "This new-fangled psychology is all wrong. How could I reject my own baby?"—or, "That my child dislikes me!—he really doesn't mean what he says when he is in a tantrum cursing me."

She goes on to say:

The idea of ambivalence can be presented more successfully than rejection in a very simple form, such as: "Of course you love your child, but there are times when you are irritated since you are human and all human beings sometimes feel this way."<sup>5</sup>

### *EXPRESSION BY PARENT*

#### NEGLECT OF CHILD

Parents can show hostility to a child in a number of ways. Perhaps the most serious of these is to neglect a child. In the previous discussion of security it was pointed out that an infant coming into the world needs the care and protection which a mother and father can give. If a parent fails in this obligation of parenthood and more or less seriously neglects the child, this situation is going to be a distinct threat to the child's security. Such neglect can go all the way from total disavowal of the parent's responsibility, as, for instance, when an unmarried mother leaves her baby on the steps of a church, to more subtle expressions of neglect, as when a mother fails to remember the feeding hour or leaves a child alone to its own devices while she visits a neighbor or attends a meeting, or when she is careless about his clothing, health, or training. A good mother will take responsibility for seeing that her child is trained to become an acceptable member of society. When the child's training in eating habits, in toilet cleanliness, or in nonaggressive ways of getting along with others is neglected,

<sup>5</sup> M. E. Fries, "The Child's Ego Development and the Training of Adults in His Environment." *The Psychoanalytic Study of the Child*, Vol. II, pp. 100, 101. International Universities Press, 1946.

the results show not only in the child's behavior but also in his emotional insecurity.

#### SEPARATION OF CHILD FROM PARENT

Of all of the ways in which neglect can be expressed, the separation of the child from the parents is perhaps the most serious. Most parents are not aware of the serious consequences of leaving the child alone. Being alone is, to the child, a sign that he is neglected and that no one is at hand to attend to his needs. Since his needs are always cared for at a very early age by other persons, he associates his security with the presence of people and learns that in their absence his needs go unanswered. The tiny baby is sensitive to the comings and goings of his mother or nurse. Even a mother's absence of a few minutes may be sufficient to arouse anxiety in the infant. One of the common symptoms of children brought to clinics is the inability to tolerate separation from the mother. These children will not permit themselves to be separated from their mothers but cling to them and insist that they go with them wherever they are taken. Such children frequently insist that another person be with them in the room even when they are playing by themselves. They also find it very difficult to go to school and be left there by their mothers.

Separation may take such serious forms as deserting the child or evicting the child from the home or placing the child in an institution. When a parent places a child in a boarding school, a military school, or a camp, it usually is done with the manifest intention of serving the child's best interests. However, underlying such a placement may be the desire of the parents to be rid of the child, at least for part of the day or part of the year, and to give the child over into the care of someone else. Separation in the form of punishment, as when the parent locks the child in a closet or in the basement, or bars the door so that he cannot come in from the outside, usually has a profound and traumatic effect. Mothers

who leave their children with others while at work or on visits or attending clubs or meetings or who secure a baby sitter to stay with the child when they go out in the evening are not aware of the threat that they create to the child's security. A mother and father recently came to New York to study for the year, leaving the younger child with the maternal grandmother in a distant part of the country and bringing the older child with them. The mother had been working since the younger child was one year old. Within two months, the mother was called home because the younger child had developed alarming fainting spells. Thorough physical, glandular, and neurological examinations indicated nothing wrong organically. The best hypothesis was that the child was reacting in this manner to the long separation from her parents and to the favored position of her older sister who could accompany the parents. It is perhaps easy to see how an extended separation of this kind might have its severe traumatic effects. What is not so generally recognized is that even the briefest separation from a very young infant, such as leaving the room for a moment or giving one's attention to other persons, may be interpreted by the child as neglect and a threat of insecurity. This does not mean, of course, that a mother should never dare to absent herself from a child; but if the mother tends to neglect the child or to feel hostile toward it, the briefest separation will be a sign of these feelings to even a small child.

The blitz in London in 1940 provided an opportunity for studying the reactions of children to separation. Freud and Burlingham<sup>6</sup> report that a young child may go through severe bombing episodes which are extremely traumatic for adults without suffering any apparent emotional disturbance provided their parents stay with them and keep their poise. But separation from the parents produces a severe emotional upset. Where separations were necessary, as in evacuation of

<sup>6</sup> Anna Freud and D. T. Burlingham, *War and Children* New York International Universities Press, 1943.

children from the city to the country, it was believed that the results were less permanently harmful if the process of separation was gradual, and long-drawn-out. Although the child apparently suffered more, the results left fewer emotional scars than would an abrupt separation with its accompanying repression and neurotic disturbance. With visits from the parents at increasingly longer intervals there was a possibility for effecting a more stable and satisfactory adjustment to the fact of separation.

#### DENIAL OF CHILD

Denying the child is one of a variety of positive expressions of hostility shown by parents. Perhaps the earliest way in which this denial is expressed is by discontinuing breast feeding, which is not only the child's greatest pleasure but also the surest mark of his mother's care and affection and the surest guarantee of his security. Mothers will have all sorts of excuses for discontinuing breast feeding. Milk stops flowing or it does not provide proper nourishment for the child, or the mother is too nervous to nurse the child easily. Of course these reasons may be real, but underlying them in many instances is a dislike for the process and also for the child. A parent will clearly show her feelings of hostility when she denies the child pleasure or withholds gifts.

Mrs. B's son Jack has been feasting his eyes on a pencil set in the five-and-ten-cent store on his way to school. Mrs. B tells him he cannot have the pencil set until he brings home a good report from school. Giving Jack the gift which he so very much craves is made to depend first on his fulfilling certain obligations. Mrs. B evidently has not stopped to consider that ownership of the pencil set may be desirable, that it might encourage Jack to do better work in school, that it would show her own fondness for him. This bargaining attitude in a mother may be an expression of her hatred toward the child but it is cleverly camouflaged by her apparent efforts to help him succeed in his school work. Incidentally, the

mother does not recognize that Jack's poor school work is also a response to her unconscious hostility. A mother may go even further than this—dress her daughter in old-fashioned or uncomfortable clothing, or fail to provide the best educational advantages for a son. Again, such denials of advantages or privileges are usually camouflaged by excuses of a desire to shield the child from temptation or of need for economy.

#### PUNISHMENT AND MALTREATMENT OF CHILD

Probably the most obvious expression of hostility by a parent is through *punishment* or *physical maltreatment* of the child. It goes without saying that a parent who strikes the child on the least provocation at any petty annoyance has hostile feelings toward him. However, many parents will justify such expressions of hostility by saying it is necessary to use physical force in order to control the child and to exact obedience. A surprising number of parents feel it necessary to inflict physical punishment on a child in order to establish discipline. Parents will spank or whip a child or even report the child to authorities or turn him over to them for trivial reasons. Many parents make copious use of verbal punishment through nagging and scolding.

Mrs. C insists that the only way she can control her eight-year-old son, Buck, is by constant use of physical punishment. She uses a leather strap or a cane and, in the spring, will cut a bundle of switches for the purpose. Buck is thrashed for refusing to obey, for not picking up his things, for not coming in from play, for not going to bed promptly when told, or for not doing his homework, and also when he is insolent or rude or uses vulgar language.

#### USE OF THREATS

Parents may show their hostility by *threatening* punishment which frequently may never be administered. If followed by punishment, a threat may serve its purpose as a signal of what is to follow. Whether or not a threat actually

serves its intended purpose of modifying the child's behavior, at least it serves as an expression of the parent's feeling toward the child and will have the same emotional effect that any expression of hostility by the parent would have. There is reason to believe that a threat to the ego ("I am going to tell your teacher how lazy you are") may be more traumatic in its effects than a threat of deprivation ("You can't join in the game until you have finished your homework") or a threat of physical punishment (whose rigors the child has already tested). However, the harmfulness of a threat cannot be predicted with assurance as it depends in large part on its fantasy connotation. Parents in extreme cases may threaten not only to punish or to report the child to authority, but even to evict the child from the home and send him away. Numbers of parents will deliberately frighten a child by threatening that the policeman will arrest him, that the bogey-man will get him if he makes too much noise or runs out into the street, or that some injury or disease will result if he does not follow the parent's warning. Sometimes these threats and the anticipation of the awful consequences actually have a greater traumatic effect on the child than would the punishment itself. The anticipation frequently arouses considerably greater terror in fantasy than the actual experience would.

#### HUMILIATION OF CHILD

The expressions of hostility which have been enumerated are of the more spontaneous and overt type. They may not be the ones, however, that cut the deepest. Those designed to hurt the ego or self-respect of the child and to humiliate him may actually have more disastrous effects on personality development than the more open cuffs and beatings. Parents can do severe damage to a child's growing personality by criticism, open or implied, by ridicule, by blame, or by unfavorable comparison of the child with others. These expressions of attitude and feeling by the parent may be subtle and indirect. The nickname which a child receives



not only may be an expression of fondness, but also may carry a sharp charge of humiliation. The child who is called "Skinny" or "Redtop" or "Hairy Face" well knows that such nicknames are a mixture of love and contempt, with the contempt showing through pretty plainly.

Some of the deepest wounds which children experience are caused by their being compared unfavorably with a brother or sister. Such comparisons may not be made openly and directly but can be implied through innuendo. If Charles is referred to on every occasion by fond parents as being a bright child and having a fine school record, Arthur draws his own conclusions as to where he stands in his parents' regard. If the beautiful curls of the little girl across the street are frequently commented on, Martha, the daughter of the family, knows well what her parents think of her own stringy hair. Parents can deeply hurt a child by petty slights, by forgetting one child in the family when others are being remembered, by overlooking a child when it is his turn at a game, by taking small and unfair advantage, by relegating a child's bed to the draftiest corner of a room, placing his desk where the light is bad, or seating him at the dining table where his chair is continually being bumped by passers-by. Parents who meet the child's outgoing spontaneity with coldness, sternness, and misunderstanding place a blight on his social reactions and security. A parent can do no greater injury to the child than to forget his birthday or to ignore the fine report card brought home from school or the prize won in the tennis tournament.

#### GENERAL EXPRESSION OF ATTITUDE AND FEELING

Most parents can hide from an inquisitive world expressions of hostility and unkindly feeling, but they will still show their true feeling toward a child by a variety of expressions of attitude. It may not be an exaggeration to say that every parent who brings a child to a child guidance clinic is to some extent rejecting the child. The very fact that the child does

not satisfy and is a problem shows the direction of the parent's feeling. Whenever a parent states his child's shortcomings, criticizes the child to others, becomes annoyed with the child, does not speak well of him, is dissatisfied with the child's achievements, or is suspicious of the child's behavior, he is showing the direction of his feeling. Similarly, the parent who shows little interest in the child, forgets to mention his child when talking over his own plans and ambitions with a friend, again shows the place that his child occupies in his thoughts and interests.

Indeed, a parent may not only passively reject a child by criticizing him to others, but may influence other children, the neighbors, or the school also to reject him by pointing out how bad he is. Many a school that would like to adopt a constructively sympathetic and helpful attitude toward a child is prevented by parents who insist on discipline and the tightening of screws. When such parents vent their hostility directly on a child, they also influence others to treat the child in the same manner.

It is sometimes thought that parental rejection of a child is shown most clearly by the child's being unwanted at birth. Being unwanted at birth is one sure index of parental rejection, but it is only a minor index. The surest way for the outside observer to discover most quickly the attitude of a parent toward a child is to note in what terms he refers to his child. If the parent refers to Jennie fondly and with evident pride there are good chances that Jennie is "accepted." If a parent mentions his child in a spirit of criticism and dissatisfaction and emphasizes the child's shortcomings and limitations, then one may suspect that justly or unjustly the parent holds feelings of hate toward the child.

#### EVIDENCE IN CHILD'S BEHAVIOR OF PARENTAL REJECTION

This extended recital of the various ways in which parents exhibit their negative feelings toward their offspring may seem to some to be intensely discouraging. Practically no

parent will escape meeting the above criteria in some way or at some time. Actually, however, it should be recognized that it is natural for every parent to feel dissatisfaction with a child at some time or another. To reject a child infrequently and mildly is not serious. As was mentioned earlier, it is the net balance of love and hate that counts and not the isolated expression of either feeling. However, rejection does occur more frequently than is ordinarily imagined, and even in the best regulated families. One certain indication of parental attitude will be found in the child's behavior. If the child shows the signs which are known to result from rejection, then the evidence is clear that rejection exists. Likewise, the child who does not show these signs may be considered an accepted child even though the parents apparently are careless or punitive. Rejection is more serious the earlier it occurs; if a mother rejects her daughter for the first time in adolescence, the effect on personality may hardly be noticeable, but rejection of the child under a year old has a profound effect on the child's personality. Rejection is also more serious when the child's self is weak and unstructured; the individual with strong positive self-valuation and self-esteem is not going to be easily bowled over by threats coming from without.

#### REJECTION BY ONE VERSUS BY BOTH PARENTS

Since there are two parents the question is naturally raised whether rejection by only one parent is as serious as rejection by both. Naturally the child is most secure when he is accepted by both parents. There is a threat to security when one parent, particularly the mother, rejects the child, especially at a time when the child is dependent on the mother for love and support. Usually neglect by a mother is more serious because ordinarily the mother is closer to the young child and the child depends more on her ministrations. When one parent shows hostility or neglect toward a child there is inevitable repercussion on the child's emotional development, and this can be only partially compensated for by special

devotion by the other parent. However, rejection by one parent may be made up, in part at least, by warm acceptance by the other parent, who may be in a position to implement his acceptance by care and protection at opportune moments. Even though the rejecting parent may supervise most of the day's activities, there is some compensation for the child if he rests secure in the unchanging warmth and affection of the other. Sometimes this affection may be expressed by subtle signs, such as the glance of an eye or sympathy in the voice, and these tokens of "caring" may be quite enough to assure the child of an ally and to create the needed emotional security. Rejection by one parent may also be compensated for by other individuals, such as a nursemaid, an aunt, a neighbor, or a teacher, although these more distant relationships, while warm and supporting, may fail to provide all the requirements of security because of their fleeting and tenuous character. It is not possible to predict with assurance the effect on personality of the many subtle variations of parental support and rejection. In general, acceptance by a parent creates elements of strength in the personality and rejection by a parent creates elements of weakness.

#### *CHILD'S RESPONSE TO DENIAL OF LOVE AND EXPRESSION OF HATE BY PARENTS*

##### ATTEMPTS TO WIN AFFECTION

Children meet parental rejection in a number of clearly defined ways which can be recognized by the astute observer, once the dynamics of the relationship are clear. In the first place, a healthy, normal child will make attempts to win the affection of the parents if he feels that this affection is denied or that it may be withdrawn. Lafore<sup>7</sup> who was able to observe preschool children and parents together in the home

<sup>7</sup> G. G. Lafore, *Practices of Parents in Dealing with Preschool Children*, p. 141. Child Development Monograph No. 31 New York Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1945.

found that the parents in her study who presented the *smallest* number of affectionate advances to their children received the *largest* number of affectionate advances from their children. If the child's most strenuous efforts do not seem to promise success in extracting affection from the parent, at least the parent's *attention* to the child will be the nearest token of affection that the child can obtain. Sometimes a child will clutch at some symbol of the parent's love, even a symbol which seemingly has little connection with the thing which is so much desired. For example, a child may steal an object which in some obscure way is related to the mother or which she particularly prizes, and which thereby stands as a token for the mother the child has apparently lost. This attempt to win affection would seem to be a response more particularly to a denial of love than to an open expression of hostility.

The rejected child tends to watch his parents (or parent substitutes) to a greater extent than the secure child. Since he is in danger of "losing" his parents and since separation from them poses for him a threat of traumatic proportions he builds up a habit of watching over his parents. He becomes curious as to their plans and their comings and goings. The child whose attention is confined to watching his parents cannot possibly be free to devote his attention to exploring, manipulating, and mastering his environment, all of which are so necessary if he is to grow up self-reliant and secure.

#### ATTENTION-GETTING BEHAVIOR

Attention-getting behavior is a well-known device to win a parent's interest and affection. Some children attempt this by whining or complaining, others by clinging. The child who is brought to the clinic may tease for permission to take home some trivial gift, such as a piece of chalk or a small piece of plasticine. Begging for a gift is a pretty sure sign that the child wants what another can give, namely, the warmth of love. Hyperactivity in a child, restless running about, jump-

ing up and down, loud and boisterous shouting and laughter, all attract interest to the self and command a parent's attention. The child who is seeking praise, who says, "Watch me, see how high I can jump," who craves recognition, who strives for superiority, is fundamentally trying to win the warm place in another's affections which is denied. Teachers readily recognize the attention-getting child in the classroom who makes bids to be the cynosure by restless behavior, wisecracks, and failure to conform. Such children are striving in the classroom to secure the most important thing in life for them, which they are denied at home.

It seems somewhat anomalous that children should strive for love by being annoying, but sometimes they can gain their parents' attention only by their naughtiness. Children are adept at discovering their parents' weak spots and at an early age learn the things that their parents most care about or are most afraid of. It is on these points that the children will concentrate their efforts. They know what things the parents cherish the most, and it will be these objects which are most frequently broken or damaged. They early discover that their parents are afraid of disease or accident or loss of prestige, and they will manage to become ill or hurt, or will mingle with low-class people or will fail in school. It seems impossible that children should purposely (although without clear awareness of the purpose) fail in school. What many parents prize most highly, namely, normal school progress and good reports from school, are the very things in which children so often manage to fail. Children intuitively discern where their parents have invested the greatest amount of self-esteem and they are able to inflict the most acute pain on the parents by wounding them at these sensitive points. The traditional minister's son who becomes wild or delinquent perhaps has hit upon that very thing about which his father is most deeply concerned. The child who damages property may do so with full knowledge that his parents will have to pay the bill; and children may steal, not only because what

they steal has a token value of the love and affection which is denied them, but also because it gets them into trouble and so ensures a way of bringing their parents to their defense.

Children will also attempt to gain security with their parents by becoming or remaining helpless. One little boy has repeatedly had injuries to his head. One time he fell from a fence and landed squarely on his head. On another occasion he was struck on the head by another child with a stick. Each of these head injuries would seem to be purely accidental and yet they occurred more frequently with him than with most children. We know also that the mother is mortally afraid of injuries of this kind and that when they occur the child gets all sorts of attentions which he is otherwise denied. Repeated illnesses in children may have the same sort of meaning. Many neurotic disturbances in children, such as thumb-sucking, refusing to eat, screaming, failing to talk, preoccupation with elimination, whether calculated or not, actually do give a mother concern and force her to take steps to correct the situation. Nocturnal enuresis in children is a potent weapon, to be used almost consciously for such a purpose, as it gives a mother much annoyance and labor and yet is something over which the child seems to have no control inasmuch as it happens during sleep. Temper tantrums also render a parent helpless and enable a child to enforce his own way.

#### PSYCHOPATHIC AND UNSTABLE TENDENCIES

Children who are much neglected or who are harshly treated may develop psychopathic and unstable tendencies. The psychopathic child is one characterized by utter disregard of rules and conventions of society, by shallow feeling, by lack of reactions of guilt, and by emotional instability.<sup>8</sup> He has not learned self-control nor developed behavior which is socially acceptable. Rejected children have low frustration

<sup>8</sup> Phyllis Greenacre, "Conscience in the Psychopath" *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 15: 495-509, 1945.

tolerance. Since the parents have not exercised restraint or control, the child himself acquires no conscience or restraints from within. His superego is embryonic and consequently he is without feelings of guilt or remorse.

Also under this same heading, perhaps, should be included unstable tendencies which may result from neglect and harsh treatment. Since the child in his training has never learned to tolerate frustration, he may be deeply upset when frustrated and instead of reacting by appropriate adjustments may respond by stormy and highly emotional methods. Lafore<sup>9</sup> found that parents who showed large numbers of instances of blaming, hurrying, punishing, threatening, and interfering had children who presented large numbers of instances of crying.

#### COUNTERHOSTILITY

Another important reaction to rejection, particularly to open expression of hostility by the parent, is counterhostility on the part of the child. One of the clearest child reactions to rejection, as found in the various studies that have been made, is *aggression* on the part of the child. Lafore, for instance, found in her study that the parents who presented the largest number of instances of *dictating* to and *interfering* with their children received the largest number of expressions of *hostility* from their children.<sup>10</sup> Those parents who presented many instances of *ignoring* the child and *diverting* the child received many instances of *teasing* and *nagging* from the child. She also found that the parents who often *interfered* with their children encountered large numbers of instances of *resistance* by them. Parental neglect prevents cooperative and tender relations with others from developing in children. To punishment or humiliation by parents many children will respond by retaliation and revenge. Here the purpose is not so much to secure the parents' affection or attention as to hurt the parents by payment in kind for the treatment received. Par-

<sup>9</sup> Lafore, *op. cit.*, p. 141.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*



ents of aggressive children have been noted to be particularly lacking in warmth, sympathy, and understanding, and to be cold and indifferent. Severely rejected children frequently show resistance, rebellion, and revolt. They are not amenable to authority and they give trouble at school and in the community as well as in the home. This behavior seemingly is not consciously planned by the child and is outside his control. For instance, one child persisted in cutting clothing and in damaging articles of furniture. The child herself could not say why she did this and otherwise seemed to be a docile, agreeable child. In this case the hostility resulting from parental neglect was concentrated in neurotic behavior.

Sibling rivalry is to be expected in every family. Parents should know that every child will resent to a greater or less degree the coming into the family group of a new baby, who thereby displaces him in his exclusive rights to his mother's attention and care. But sibling rivalry and jealousy will be acute in proportion to the extent of parental rejection. The secure child will welcome the newborn baby brother or sister with a minimum of hostility; the rejected child will show more or less serious signs of sibling rivalry. Parents should know that no amount of "information" will prepare a child for the birth of another child if the parent feels hostile toward and dissatisfied with the first child. But even the loved child needs added assurance from his parents when a new baby arrives, since his self-valuation may not yet be strong enough to withstand the withdrawal of attention from himself.

One way in which this aroused hostility expresses itself is striving for power. The rejected child sometimes attempts to gain security by forcing other individuals—even his parents—to yield to his will. The overdominating adult may be compensating for rejection in early childhood by his parents.

Counterhostility in response to rejection may show itself in more or less serious delinquencies. Attacks on other children or other acts of violence may be the child's response to irritations, humiliations, or conflicts produced in the home

situation. Frequently bullying and cruelty to other children grow out of resentments for real or fantasied favoritism shown by the parents to a sibling. A long list of delinquencies—anything which harms another person or property—comes under this heading of counterhostility.

This response by counterhostility is also motivated by a need for punishment which the impulse toward counterhostility will bring in its wake. That is to say, if in response to rejection a boy feels hostile to a parent or other authority, then he may also unconsciously feel a need for punishment and will actually give expression to his hostility so that punishment will be forthcoming. Punishment which heretofore has been received as an expression of parental hostility is now accepted as being deserved by the child, and he feels the need to receive such punishment as a result of his own hostile feelings toward his parents. So it has been found that children frequently commit misdemeanors and become incorrigible as a method of bringing on themselves the punishment which their own violent feelings in fantasy seem to demand.

Finally, parental rejection and hostility will arouse in the child and youth feelings of hate, defiance, resentment, bitterness, jealousy, and strong discontent. These feelings are the concomitants of aggressive acts and are a natural response to expressions of hostility by the parent. An illustration of one of the many specialized forms of counterhostility is a feeling of resentment against women in general which may occur in a boy whose own mother rejects him on account of jealousy of his sex.

#### FEAR OF OWN HOSTILE IMPULSES A REACTION FORMATION AGAINST COUNTERHOSTILITY

Hostile impulses may become frightening to a child, and he may repress them and take steps to disguise or counteract them. One way in which this repression of hostility shows itself is through ordinary expressions of fearfulness and

anxiety. Lafore<sup>11</sup> found that children who were frequently *threatened* scored high on *fearfulness*. It cannot be claimed that all unreasonable fears and tensions of children result from parental rejection. However, when unreasonable fears do arise, one ought to look for their cause, among other factors, in parent-child relationships.

Another method by which insecurity is reacted to is by clinging to a routine. One sometimes finds a child who is almost obsessional in his manner of carrying through rigidly each day's program without change. The same steps must be followed without deviation in bathing, dressing, eating. The same cup and spoon must be used. He must have the same place at the table. His clothing must be hung on the same hook. Any deviation from these established patterns gives rise to unreasonable anxiety. It is as though the child finds his security in the stability of the day's program a substitute for security from his parents; any change in schedule becomes a distinct threat. Similarly with older children, changes in class or school, or moving from one locality to another, may be reacted to by the child as traumas. Such reactions are to be contrasted with those of the child who feels secure with his parents and so can tolerate or even look forward to changes with considerable pleasurable anticipation.

Similarly, one should look to rejection as one factor responsible for perfectionist tendencies. Perfectionism is one form of reaction formation against a rebellious defiance of parental rejection. Not being able to rebel openly, the rejected child directs his rebellious urges into his tasks, and in order to avoid criticism he makes an effort to complete his work so perfectly that it will be without reproach. The desire to outstrip his rivals—siblings in the family, possibly—may be another factor which leads to perfectionism. Whatever the outer compulsions, the rebellion and the desire to please and to escape criti-

<sup>11</sup> Lafore, *op. cit.*, p. 142.

cism are gathered up into the inner compulsive trend toward perfectionism.

Insecurity growing out of hostile parental attitudes is frequently met by withdrawing from social contacts, becoming isolated, and finding it difficult to play with other children. Such a child is known as shy or bashful. This tendency may even go so far as to lead to a withdrawal of curiosity. A child whose normal curiosity is inhibited usually is found to be inhibiting strong aggressive trends, which will, however, become evident in his play when he finally ventures to engage in it. Escape will also show itself by his running away from competition, refusing to play games, or being very upset over losing.

Indeed, this need for detachment may be not merely a passive escape, but a more vigorous protest and resistance against emotional entanglements. The rejected child may so distrust others that he rebuffs their attempts to be friendly and affectionate toward him. Knowing only disappointment in his expectations from others in the past, he does not dare subject himself to the threat of similar rebuffs and disappointments in the future.

Projecting blame on others is also a method of escape. A little boy, Timothy, whose mother is filled with hostile feelings and is very critical of both her sons, has developed the trick of placing the blame on Tom, his older brother. When his mother challenges Timothy and says, "Who left the door open?" he will retort by saying, "Tom did it." On one occasion he even went so far as to deny that he hurt himself and to say that it was Tom who hurt him. One can guess that the little fellow feared blame and criticism so keenly that he forestalled it on every possible occasion by projecting any mistake onto his older brother.

Many delinquencies are in the nature of an escape. Running away from home and truancy from school, both of which are classed as delinquencies, will be found to stem from rejection and from the child's desire to escape from an unhappy

situation. One may always be sure that when a child runs away from home he is running away from an unhappy situation and when a child plays truant from school he is running away from too much pressure put on him by the school. But equally, if not more frequently, he is running away from himself and from his own hostile tendencies. And if the truth were known, the child who runs away is searching both in fantasy and in reality for the security which his home or his school does not provide. Such a child is difficult to question because it is painful for him to express openly all of the hatred that he feels.

Children may also react to rejection by being overobedient, oversubmissive, too docile and ingratiating. Oversubmissiveness is selected, as will be shown later, as the method of managing rejection when the rejection is expressed somewhat subtly and in disguised form by considerable parental pressure in the form of strictness and discipline. Children have many devices for managing overstrict and hostile handling by parents. One method which is sometimes seen is a form of rationalization. The child seems to enjoy the punishment or to enter into it willingly and wholeheartedly. It is as though he were saying, if he is required to stay in after school, "This is what I intended to do anyway." Incidentally this attitude also serves as a form of counterhostility, because most parents become angry if punishment does not seem to hurt. A parent apparently gives punishment in order not only to correct a child but also to gain certain satisfactions himself, and if the child does not react by expressions of pain, anger, or fear the parent is not satisfied.

Still another method by which children may avoid openly showing their hostile tendencies is *regression*. The child who is denied affection may assume a helplessness which he has long outgrown but which used to bring him his mother's care and ministrations. Regression is frequently used as a method of managing hostile tendencies which are stimulated by greater affection and attention given to younger brothers and sisters

in the family. It is as though the child were attempting to make himself younger so that he could occupy the more favored position.

Another method of managing or disguising hostile tendencies which may arise from one or another expression of rejection is *self-depreciation* and *self-criticalness*. If a child is shown no appreciation or affection he can only conclude that others place small value on him and that he is not worthy of being wanted by them. These feelings, as we shall see, arise from a number of different circumstances. When they are caused as a response to rejection, they undoubtedly arise from a sense of guilt which the unconscious and repressed hostile tendencies arouse. The child unconsciously feels like hurting his mother, but since to do so is wrong, the impulse makes him feel ashamed, miserable, despicable. Going a step further, this self-depreciation may be a form of self-punishment—an introjection of a punishment which he has actually received when he has exhibited hostile tendencies openly and directly. Here is a child who meets rejection by what is almost akin to depression—no care is given to appearance, the countenance is sad, the posture is slumped, and the child goes around with a hangdog or slinking appearance. In this roundabout way such an attitude and bearing indicate the low self-regard which may mirror rather directly the low regard in which the child is held by parents and other members of the family. Instead of fighting back, the child tends to receive in humiliation the blows rained on him.

Abnormal manifestations of sex represent still another way in which hostile tendencies are redirected. It has already been suggested that one of the first ways in which a mother may demonstrate hostile feelings toward a child is to cease nursing him. The child who is frustrated in early nursing experiences may turn to autoerotic practices for satisfaction. Such satisfactions, which would first be seen in the form of thumb-sucking, may later spread to the stimulation of the genitals; masturbation is frequently a sign that the child is

securing direct self-stimulated sensual satisfaction in lieu of the satisfaction which normally should come from affectional relationships with others. When the mother is demanding and punitive the boy may react by developing homosexual tendencies, that is, by identifying himself with the mother and taking on feminine ways.

#### RETARDATION

Spitz presents evidence which points to the possibility that depriving infants of normal maternal warmth and protection may actually cause retardation in mental growth, particularly in perception and locomotion.<sup>12</sup> Infants in a "nursery" (a penal institution where delinquent girls are sequestered with their own babies), in spite of limited facilities, made better progress in development than babies in a "foundling home," where one nurse has charge of eight infants. And this advantage in development was found in the situation where the mothers were permitted to care for their children in spite of marked handicaps in the mentality and social adjustment of these mothers. The presence of a mother or her substitute is sufficient to compensate for all the other deprivations.

Rejection hinders sublimation. The child who has been rejected has so many emotional problems with which to deal that he frequently is hindered in working out effective sublimations of his basic drives. The rejected child is so concerned with the struggle for security in his relations with others that he cannot give his attention to mastery of the outside world. The neglected child, therefore, may fail to learn to explore or construct. He may attain little mechanical interest or ingenuity, or little artistic interest or appreciation. He may give up enterprises easily and become easily blocked or discouraged. Some such children may go so far as to give up their strivings for independence and self-fulfillment in order to avoid taking positive measures.

<sup>12</sup> R. A. Spitz, "Hospitalism." *The Psychoanalytic Study of the Child*, Vol. I, pp. 53-74. New York: International Universities Press, 1945.

## FEELINGS AS RESPONSES TO REJECTION

Finally, repressed hostile feelings may result in feelings of inferiority, insecurity, inadequacy, anxiety, worthlessness, isolation, humiliation, being unwanted, being crushed, or being cheated. These are almost, by definition, evidence of insecurity, and insecurity, as we have seen, stems from early familial relations. As a result of the teachings of Adler, we are accustomed to look for the explanation of feelings of inferiority in some kind of actual organic inferiority or inadequacy in skills and achievement. However, more basic than this explanation in terms of inadequacy is the explanation in terms of insufficient support in infancy. Lying behind feelings of inadequacy will almost always be found failure to receive proper recognition. In Lafore's study the children who received the smallest number of affectionate advances from the mother were rated as least secure. On the other hand, high self-esteem may be a compensating cover for a deeper and inner self-devaluation.

## CONSTRUCTIVE REACTIONS TO REJECTION

Burgum,<sup>13</sup> in a significant article, pointed out certain favorable outcomes of mild neglect. It seems that the balance of mild rejection is not all on the unfavorable side so far as the development of the child is concerned. For instance, a certain amount of neglect is necessary in order that the child may develop independence. A child who is left to himself may develop a capacity to amuse himself, to manipulate his toys, and to satisfy his own wants. The children who develop special talents and interests are, by and large, not the ones who are forced by constant urging but those who are left to their own devices for considerable periods of time.

It has also been observed that mild neglect in the home may lead to good social adjustment outside the home. A certain

<sup>13</sup> Mildred Burgum, "Constructive Values Associated with Rejection." *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 10: 312-326, April 1940.



amount of compensation seems to be at work here. The child who cannot find the emotional warmth that he craves at home may seek it with some neighbor or may find it with groups of his contemporaries. It is well known that gangs and club groups of young children frequently serve as a substitute or compensation for neglect in the home. In early adolescence the child who finds his home a stern, forbidding, and unfriendly place may seek companionship among those of his own age group, in contrast to the overprotected child who may cling to the home and make few outside contacts until a later age. A child whose parents disappoint him may try to find a substitute in some teacher or scoutmaster, or in an older child.

Similarly, a certain amount of mild neglect may force early maturity on a child. A child who is more or less on his own and is forced to shift for himself may even develop early sexual maturation and heterosexual interests, and have early heterosexual experiences. He will at least develop early responsiveness to affectional relationships outside the home.

Goldfarb,<sup>14</sup> who has had an opportunity to study children reared in institutions and to compare them with children brought up in foster homes, believes that there is a difference between deprived children and children who have been more actively rejected. This leads to the probability that eventually, after further investigation, it will be found that there are characteristic child responses to characteristic forms of expression of parental hate and hostility. Goldfarb distinguishes between children whose parents exhibit hostility directly by denial of privileges, punishment, threats of punishment, and humiliation, all of which he calls rejection, and children who are simply neglected or separated from their parents (perhaps by accident or death). If the latter children are placed in institutions where, either through lack of funds or careless or neglectful management, they are deprived of a warm and supporting relationship, the neglect and emotional depriva-

<sup>14</sup> William Goldfarb, "Psychological Privation in Infancy and Subsequent Adjustment" *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 15: 247-255, 1945.

tion become serious in their consequences. Goldfarb finds that deprived and neglected children show grave defects in thinking, characterized by a limited capacity for the abstract. Their concepts of time and space are defective and they have difficulty in learning songs, rhymes, and stories. There is increased motility. Disturbances which the observer notes as restlessness and social aggression are increased. There is extreme affect hunger—an insatiable demand to be noticed, praised, and cuddled. Normal inhibitions in social relationships are lacking. All relationships with other people are characterized by superficiality and flightiness. The child demands attention one moment, then abruptly rushes off to some other interest. There is an absence of normal tension and anxiety.<sup>15</sup> There is a regression in social relationships and play with other children is superficial and lacks constructive direction.

Rejected children, on the other hand, those who have been punished and mistreated, show a number of more promising characteristics, according to Goldfarb, as compared with institutionalized (deprived) children. Rejected children have a greater capacity for relationships and a greater ability to identify with others than have the institutionalized children. The rejected child is more ambitious, purposeful, and goal-seeking. He shows more anxiety and tension. He is in conflict, whereas the deprived child is too underdeveloped even to show conflict. Goldfarb believes that the rejected child has greater capacity for insight. One should recognize that these statements are merely relative and represent a comparison between these two groups only. Actually accepted children show these desirable characteristics to a stronger degree than rejected children. Goldfarb's main point is that neglect, separation, and deprivation have more harmful and deleterious effects on children's personality development than punishment, threats, and humiliation.

<sup>15</sup> In this connection, institutionalization has been suggested for children who are overtense and anxious and whose own homes seem to possess no constructive influences.

*DYNAMIC FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH DENIAL  
OF LOVE AND EXPRESSION OF HATE*

IMMEDIATE FACTORS

In discussing the dynamics underlying each of the several varieties of parent-child relationships, there will first be a presentation of factors in the immediate situation which may be responsible for the parents' attitudes, and then a discussion of possible deep personality and unconscious factors which may also have an influence.

The fact that the child may be an economic burden is frequently observed to be a factor in the immediate situation which makes parental acceptance of the child difficult. This factor, however, has to operate against the natural tendencies of parents to be fond of their children even in the face of financial insecurity. If the parent is selfish or if a child becomes an obstacle to satisfying some ambition, the child may suffer from the parent's sense of frustration.

Children sometimes interfere with the activities of their parents. It is not uncommon to find that a mother longs to get back into her career in music, art, writing, or business which she relinquished when she married. Sometimes children interfere with a mother's social aspirations. Sometimes giving birth to a child is merely an interlude or an extended vacation from a job. There are mothers who, after giving birth to a child, return to work as soon as they are strong enough to do so. Even though arrangements are made for the care of the child by a nurse or a grandmother, sooner or later the child recognizes that the person really responsible for him is giving her attention somewhere else.

A mother who works is usually required to be away from home a large part of the day, and when she returns home she must attend to her household duties, often under considerable pressure. Naturally the child whose mother works is to some degree neglected. The father's presence is important, too, and

if the nature of the father's work takes him away on extended business trips or makes it impossible for him to return home to his family until late in the evening, the child is the sufferer by this lack of companionship and support

Or the mother may associate her own ill-health with pregnancy or the birth of a child or with the strain attending his care. A child born or reared in these circumstances might be considered by a neurotic parent a threat to her own health and well-being, and hence be rejected.

Frequently a child is rejected because he fails to come up to expectations and there is a disparity between the fantasied baby and the actual one. Sometimes the parent is disappointed because a boy was wanted and a girl was born, or vice versa. Not infrequently, the very presence of the baby may after a week or so overcome the original disappointment and the mother may respond with full enjoyment of the child, who is cuddled and cared for. However, the wish for a boy or girl may have been more deep-seated. The mother may dress her little son like a girl, with long curls and lace collars even until school age, and cut off his curls only when social pressure makes this imperative. The father may be disappointed that he was not given a boy and may teach his young daughter to throw a ball or to engage in rough play. The parents are always and very naturally disappointed when the child is born with or develops physical defects or becomes mentally retarded. The activity pattern of a child at birth—his activity or passivity—may cause the mother irritation or may make her pleased with the child. Frequently the parents of a feeble-minded child are extremely fond of him, shower him with affection, and go out of their way to minister to his needs. Notwithstanding this expressed attitude there is always underlying unconscious disappointment, and this disappointment cannot fail to be communicated to the child.

Equally serious is the parent's resentment at a child's failure to achieve in school. Many parents will make school achievement the condition of their acceptance of the child,

and the child whose school record is unsatisfactory will be subject to criticism and nagging in the family. Such disappointments in a child are quite likely to be rationalizations of deeper dislikes. Parents need to have reputable excuses for hating a child, inasmuch as parent love is the only socially accepted attitude which a parent may hold toward a child. Thus, when a parent puts severe pressure on a child to succeed in school, to make better than average grades, and to show himself capable of entering college, there is of course a reality to this point of view, but at the same time the parent's attitude may be an expression of hostility which has a far deeper foundation. Sometimes, for instance, a parent is disappointed that a child is not like a favorite brother or sister, or that the child does not compare favorably with a sister's child who has made an enviable school record and has entered college with success. Sometimes a parent may become annoyed with an over-indulged child who in later years makes a bad adjustment and adopts a number of unsatisfactory character traits. In all these instances there is evidence of the parent's identification with the child, and any failure or limitation on the part of the child is a crushing experience to the narcissism of the parent.

Other fantasies and superstitions may cause a parent to reject a child. If relatives on the other side of the family show tendencies toward drunkenness, insanity, or criminality, a parent may believe it unfortunate to have had a child. He seems a bad risk as he may be endowed with the feared incipient tendencies. If parents discover that they are incompatible and contemplate divorce, the child may then become a focus of hostility because he is an obstacle to separation. Or the parents may project responsibility and blame for their incompatibility directly onto the child.

#### PERSONALITY AND UNCONSCIOUS FACTORS IN PARENTAL REJECTION

The factors just mentioned are a few commonly found in the immediate situation which can be used by parents as

rationalizations for adopting hostile attitudes. In practically every case, however, when a parent adopts a hostile attitude toward a child there are deep, unconscious factors at work. It is probably a fair generalization to assert that in such instances the parent himself or herself has had early deprivation or spoiling, in other words, has suffered from emotional insecurity in early life, and thus returns as a continuing evil in the lives of the succeeding generation. Some workers believe that the pattern of rejection which a parent adopts is the same pattern of rejection which he experienced in his own childhood.<sup>16</sup>

But this observation has not been substantiated, and more evidence is necessary before it can be held as generally true. In those cases in which repetition of the parental pattern of rejection has been observed, it would seem that the rejecting mother had identified herself with her own rejecting mother and was repeating the same pattern with her children.<sup>17</sup>

Perhaps the most common of these unconscious factors is the revival of the Oedipus situation. This means that with the coming of a child in the family earlier attitudes of overattachment to or rivalry with father or mother which were never wholly resolved and worked through are revived. Perhaps the best illustration of this is the displacement of hate, originally directed toward the parent (grandparent), onto a child. Mrs. D was brought up very strictly by her mother, who tended to be a harsh, uncompromising despot. This mother, apparently sweet to all outsiders, really ruled her family by a teasing insistence which she used whenever a child crossed her will. Mrs. D grew up to be a most devoted daughter but with strong unconscious hate which was never worked through. When her own daughter came, Mrs. D seemed to adopt a pattern somewhat like her mother's. She

<sup>16</sup> L. H. Stein, "A Study of Overinhibited and Socialized-Aggressive Children. Part II A Qualitative Analysis of Background Factors" *Smith College Studies in Social Work*, 15: 124, 125, 1944.

<sup>17</sup> L. R. Wolberg, "The Character Structure of the Rejected Child." *Nervous Child*, 3 74-88, 1944.

was extremely strict and dominating, and she uncompromisingly enforced her will. Although Agnes was a docile, amenable child, she never could quite satisfy her mother's demands.

The father may also displace the hostility originally felt toward his own father onto his son, who becomes a new rival, this time not for his mother's affections but for his place with his wife. Unconsciously he resents the time and the devotion which his wife lavishes on his young son. Such a displacement may seem entirely fantastic, for was not the father toward whom the hostility was felt in the first place many years older, and how could such hostility be displaced onto a tiny child? But one must remember that the relationship is similar. The father figure becomes the apex in a triangle and reactions to the older family situation are revived with similar feelings and methods of adjustment in the new.

There are occasions when the coming of a child represents a break in the happy relations between a husband and wife. Perhaps the husband had struggled against an insecure place in his own childhood family and now has experienced for a year or two a real bit of heaven when he basked in the warmth of the devotion of the maternal person whom he had chosen as his wife. When the baby is born into the family he finds that he has to share some of this devotion with a newcomer and he feels himself thrust back into the earlier unhappy situation of his own childhood.

This preoccupation of one parent with the child may have a number of variations. For instance, the mother may be an emotionally immature, neurotic person who is unable to manage the household and give the child appropriate care but must continue to follow the demands of her career and her own strong ego interests. In such a case the father may assume the responsibility for the care of the child which is normally taken by the mother. He may even attend to problems of feeding and dressing the child, getting him off to school, hearing his lessons in the evening, putting him to bed, and a close attachment may grow up between father and child which sub-

stitutes in part for the usual mother-child relationship. In cases where the father has adopted the mother's role jealousy may serve even further to alienate the child from the mother.

Or, to take another variation, one parent may show hostility to a child as a method of injuring the other parent because he favors the child. In every marriage relation there is an admixture of love and hate between husband and wife and the methods of expressing hate are legion. If one child in the family becomes a favorite of one parent and that parent tends to lavish on this child more than his due of affection and fondness, the other parent may use this child as a specific object for the expression of his hostility toward his mate by slighting the child, or by placing unnecessary tasks or restrictions on him.

Similarity to displacements growing out of the Oedipus situation will be found in those displacements which pass from the sibling of the parent to his child. Father or mother may displace hostility originally felt toward a brother or sister. In this case the child may be of either sex, according to the sex of the sibling. The mother, for instance, who has never outgrown the early rivalry with her brother may find that her own son arouses these same feelings and she may use methods of hurting her child or of humiliating him similar to those which she earlier used on her brother. This may be particularly true in the case where the parent was a less favored member in her childhood family and was particularly jealous of a brother or sister who succeeded in school or who was more beautiful or who had social graces endearing him or her to others. Such qualities in her own child, whether of competence or beauty or social appeal, strangely enough, a mother may find difficult to accept. For instance, many a mother has found it difficult to accept the growing beauty of her adolescent daughter, particularly when these charms begin to attract boys, because it may remind the mother of similar jealous tensions which she suffered toward a sister with whom she went through a similar rivalry episode. In quite a contrary manner, a parent who has come from an overloving family group or who was the favored child



and was spoiled may similarly find his child to be a threat to his own security. The child becomes a possible challenge to the place of eminence which the parent has always occupied. Strange as it may seem, a parent who was an only child may have these feelings of jealousy toward one of his own children as strongly as or even more strongly than a parent who grew up as brother or sister. The parent who was an only child may want unconsciously to protect his lonely and pre-eminent position which was threatened in childhood only by fantasied brothers and sisters. Such a parent unconsciously finds that he wishes to succeed through his own endeavors rather than through the success of his own children, and unconsciously any success which one of his own children makes becomes a matter of concern rather than of pleasure for him.

As a third type of displacement, it is possible for one parent to displace feelings toward the other parent onto the child. One not infrequently hears a mother explaining away some misdemeanor of a child by saying that he takes after his father. Such a comment usually makes very clear that what the mother dislikes in the child she earlier disliked in her husband. Sometimes this displacement derives from the attitude toward some in-law. According to the mother, the child takes after his paternal grandfather or grandmother or is like an uncle or an aunt on the father's side, because it is disturbing to her to find the child's disagreeable traits to be similar to those of his own father, but not so disturbing to find these same unlikable traits in other members of the family a little further removed. Or a father may identify himself with his wife and may unconsciously be jealous of her feminine functions. He may even be jealous of the child which she bore because giving birth was not his experience. If this seems farfetched it should be remembered that this wish by men to participate in child-bearing experience is given expression in some primitive societies by the custom called the *couvade*.

The attitudes that a parent takes toward a child may also stem from the mechanism of projection. A parent may project

onto a child unconscious feelings which he harbors toward himself. These are, of course, feelings and attitudes which he introjected from criticisms and admonitions of his own parent or parent figures in his childhood. He may project onto a child some of his own feelings of guilt and unworthiness for his own unconscious hostile or incestuous tendencies toward his own parents. These deep-seated tendencies are common, but they are so deeply and firmly repressed that it is difficult to recognize them. For instance, a child may be a living reminder of the parent's guilt for unconscious incestuous tendencies and the parent will project onto the child his own feeling of unworthiness and find it very difficult to be satisfied with what the child is or does. A mother may be unable to love a child because she may feel guilty in taking over her own mother's place. This again represents an Oedipus situation which she has never wholly resolved. Such a parent may find it difficult to nurse the child or she may neglect him and turn her attention in other directions. This mother will willingly place the child with a nurse as a substitute mother, thereby freeing herself from her own guilt for occupying that position. In this case the child is unconsciously connected with the fantasy child which she had long ago wished to have by her father.

Similarly there may be guilt over unconscious hate originally directed to individuals, possibly parents, early in life. The parent who projects this guilt onto the child may deal most severely with any expression of anger in the child. Such a mother, for instance, cannot tolerate any bad behavior on the part of her child. Mrs. E complains that Mary will grow up with unsocial attitudes if Mrs. E is not successful in stopping her from quarreling and fighting with other children. When she observes Mary in even harmless attempts to stand up for herself while playing with other children, Mrs. E becomes disturbed, calls her daughter aside, and insists that she play politely. Distress over any expression of aggression on the part of her daughter is ample evidence that Mrs. E is

struggling with similar unconscious tendencies in herself. Usually such a parent rebukes a child in a pained way. The rebuke is not a forthright and vigorous combating of the tendency in the child but an appeal to the child by a remark that "It hurts Mother very much to see you so unladylike," an expression indicating that the feeling is one of guilt and is essentially the mother's own. A parent who projects unconscious tendencies onto his child is commonly referred to as insecure. A father may dominate a child as a compensation for his feelings of inferiority and inadequacy. When a parent (or teacher) is unusually harsh, severe, and demanding toward a child it becomes clear that in a deeper sense the parent (or teacher) is afraid of the child. What this means, of course, is that the parent (or teacher) is afraid principally of his own unconscious and uncontrolled tendencies.

These projected attitudes are frequently due to the fact that the parent is unable to accept his or her own sex role and projects this lack of acceptance onto the child. For instance, a parent who cannot wholly accept his own sex role will reject a child of the same sex. A father who has difficulty in accepting his own masculinity tends to reject his son, while a mother who has difficulty in playing her feminine role in life will have difficulty in accepting her daughter. The rejection here, however, tends to be primarily of those traits which are characteristic of the child's sex. A mother, for instance, may have difficulty in accepting her daughter's femininity and may caution her of possible dangers so that she will find it necessary to hide her charms. The homosexual component in a parent may make it difficult for a parent to accept a child of the opposite sex, so that occasionally we find a father who, because he is unable to accept his feminine identification and the feminine role which he unconsciously plays, rejects his daughter on whom he projects these tendencies. This father will restrict his daughter, discourage her from developing her charms, and make it difficult for her to establish normal social relations. And if she does engage in sexual experiences he will be-

come very rejecting. Similarly, a mother who unconsciously envies the male role may project her attitude toward masculine tendencies which she has difficulty in consciously accepting by rejecting masculinity in her son. She will display her unconscious envy of his sex role by tending to belittle him, to prevent him from taking on characteristics of leadership and from becoming aggressive in social relationships. This type of rejection is stronger in men than in women because homosexuality in men has a stronger social taboo than in women.

The parent who has rejected a child for any reason may find it convenient to project onto that child any of his own faults which he does not consciously recognize. For instance, a parent may accuse a child of being greedy or selfish or bad-tempered, when these are the very traits which also characterize the parent, at least unconsciously, but to which a parent strenuously objects in himself.

Sometimes a mother will reject a child because she (the mother) is so self-centered (narcissistic) and immature that she finds it difficult to give herself unselfishly and wholeheartedly to the interests of another, even a helpless infant. This kind of rejection is frequently caricatured, and ridicule is heaped on the mother who thinks too much of her own appearance, devotes excessive attention to her clothing and cosmetics, demands being waited on by her maid or butler or chauffeur, or devotes too much time to her career as singer or writer, so that her child becomes merely another object of admiration and self-enhancement. A child who is dressed up for display because he will enhance the mother's narcissism is severely rejected, inasmuch as the attentions bestowed on him serve only to provide the mother with greater pleasure or self-love. Such a parent has never outgrown her early narcissism, which was a result of too much affection and spoiling as a child. One mother who was recently brought into court for neglecting her children complained that she would miss out on having "fun" if she stayed at home with her children. Sometimes these childish women will interpret the coming of

a baby as a sign that they are growing old and consequently losing their attractiveness to men.

An even more serious form of immaturity on the part of the parents will be found in psychopathic and irresponsible individuals who marry hastily and then do not have the stability and strength of character to establish a family. Children born out of wedlock are sometimes the victims of childish and immature parents, and they often suffer from the extreme neglect which is liable to be their lot or they become overindulged.

It is impossible to specify all the ways in which parents' hostility toward their children may be expressed. A father may tempt a child to be bad in order (unconsciously) to punish him for his badness. Such a temptation resembles a seduction in that the child is encouraged to violate regulations and standards and he is then held responsible for any delinquencies which may arise. A mother, for instance, may leave money lying around in a bureau drawer or in accessible containers so that the temptation placed in the way of a child will result in his appropriating things in the stress of necessity. Similarly, a mother who has hostility toward a child may actually be unwilling to see her son well adjusted. It seems stretching the point to assert that mothers do silly things toward their children—overindulge them or fail to give them proper supervision—in order unconsciously to ensure that the child may develop inadequately and thereby provide a real basis for rejection and dissatisfaction. It is not uncommon, however, to find parents who compulsively find ways of making their children's adjustment difficult. Occasionally one finds a mother whose hostility is so pronounced that she does not dare to trust herself with her child and may find an excuse for placing the child in a boarding school, a camp, or an institution in order to protect the child from her own unconscious hostility. This putting the child away or giving him over to nurses and tutors to manage is clear evidence to the child of the reality of his mother's feelings toward him.

These represent some of the dynamic factors which operate in cases where a child is denied love and is the victim of his parents' unconscious hate toward him. Many of these illustrations may seem farfetched or impossible, but all have been observed in clinical experience and indicate some of the unconscious factors which operate in human relationships.

# 3

## PARENTAL OVERINDULGENCE EXCESSIVE GRATIFICATION—LACK OF PARENTAL CONTROL

WE TURN now to a variety of parental attitudes toward the child, all of which are characterized superficially by an overdose of indulgence and gratification by the parents. The first of these will be the simple case in which the child is the recipient of too much parental affection. Mrs. F says she feels sorry for Esther, an only child of eight who lives next door, and she cannot understand how any mother could be like Esther's mother. When Esther has to go to school or be away from home any length of time her mother begins to cry out, "Oh, what shall I do without you? It nearly kills me to have you leave me." Esther is now so uncomfortable about leaving her mother that she becomes upset every time they are separated. Esther seldom plays with other children and has no friends her own age. Mrs. F is puzzled that a mother should dote on her child so excessively, especially since it is clear that she is thereby harming the child.

### *EXPRESSION BY PARENT*

In these cases in which there is an excess of parental affection, it is almost always true that a parent derives peculiar satisfaction from the child and is using the child as a way of securing pleasure which is otherwise denied. A mother may spend an excessive amount of time with the child, never allowing him to leave her side. This usually occurs when there

are only one or two children in the family and the mother has separated herself from all outside interests. She devotes her entire life to her children and is with them from morning until night. At times when the average child is out playing with others or going to school or amusing himself, the over-indulged child is being played with by his mother, who spends many hours reading to him, playing games with him, taking him on trips, and trying to amuse him. Such a parent monopolizes the child, whom she considers her own exclusive property. She is jealous of the child and does not want him to have companionship with her husband or with other members of the family. She resents the intrusion of other children as playmates, and keeps the child from normal play experiences with others. She frequently is jealous of having the child attend school. This tendency may show itself with particular clarity during the child's adolescence, when the mother seems unable to permit the child to emancipate himself from her protection and watchful care. The overdevoted mother will supervise her adolescent daughter's social affairs with great strictness, will prevent her from enjoying natural associations with boys and girls her own age, will chaperone her at evening parties, and will attempt to censor any attachments that she may make.

The overindulgent mother seems unable to refuse the demands and requests of her child and on every occasion she gives in to his importunities. She gives him money, toys, special privileges, all out of proportion to his needs, to the appropriateness of the situation, or to the economic resources of the family. The overindulgent parent may continue the practice, which was started apparently innocently in infancy, of having the favored child sleep with her. When the practice of having the infant sleep with the parent has continued on into childhood the child may come to demand it and the over-indulgent parent may accede to these demands. Cases have been known where mothers have had their sons or daughters sleep with them even into adolescence or adulthood.



The overindulgent parent tends to side with her child even when he is obviously at fault and defends him against attacks by other children or by those in authority. She sees few, if any, of his faults and she magnifies his virtues. The overindulgent mother overpraises her son. Praise is good for a child when it is genuine, but when it is given for trivial things or even falsely it can only be harmful. An overindulgent parent sacrifices herself for the child and will deny herself clothing and advantages in order that the child may have them. Such a mother tends to coddle her child during a convalescence and continues to give attention to his insistent demands that were justified when the child was really sick and required special care but are so no longer.

The overindulgent parent may also be overprotective and overanxious, as will be described in the next chapters, and children react in many similar ways to these various expressions of overconcern.

#### *CHILD'S RESPONSE TO OVERINDULGENCE BY PARENTS*

The first effect on the child who receives excessive parental gratification is a failure to grow up emotionally and a tendency to remain infantile in behavior reactions. His play with toys will be without imagination or extremely stereotyped. He must have everything for himself and can be denied no pleasure or satisfaction. Such a child we call spoiled. The astute observer will be able to note the difference between the demands for affection by a child who has been denied it and the one who has been given too much of it. An overindulged child tends to push, to take things forcefully, whereas one who has been neglected makes demands by crying, whining, or plaguing in a childish and petulant way. The overindulged child makes excessive demands for what he wants, cannot be denied his wishes for sweets, exciting experiences, many toys, or prettier clothes, and is tyrannical in forcing compliance to his wishes from his parents or nurses. He may also have diffi-

culty in giving up his aggression. The average child learns at an early age not to bite, strike, scratch, break, or spoil, but the child who has been given excessive gratification is not to be brooked in aggressive demands, for he has not learned self-control.

The overindulged child is selfish and wants things for himself. He expects to be preferred over his brothers and sisters or cousins and is unwilling to share his toys or treasures with them. The tantrum or temper spell is not the sole prerogative of overindulged children, but it is one method by which the overindulged child learns to enforce his demands. The more indulgence such a child receives from his parents, the greater need he has to be indulged. This child is unable to make reparation for his badness or to sacrifice and to atone for his wrongdoing. He gives the impression of being a heartless, entirely egotistical "brat," with no thought for anyone except himself and a willingness to go to any extreme to gain his ends. He has difficulty in adjusting to routine. Unlike the rejected child, who frequently seeks safety in routine, the overindulged child is irked by attempts of others to fit him into a schedule. When he goes to school, he has difficulty in adjusting to the restrictions of the school situation.

The overindulged child also finds it hard to tolerate monotony. He is exceedingly restless, cannot play by himself, and must be constantly amused. When he grows older we see him as the child who is unable to settle down to a monotonous task but must find something exciting for stimulation. He may also be characterized as irresponsible, for when given a task he may or may not finish it, and if it pleases him to leave it and run off to play he will do so without any qualms.

A child whose parents give him excessive gratification does not learn frustration tolerance and there is lacking in him a capacity to meet the demands of reality. The excessively gratified child has been prevented from maturing. Because he has not learned to adjust to frustration he becomes helpless in the face of frustration in two ways. In the first place there

may be an increase in neurotic behavior, as exhibited in nervous habits, thumb-sucking, enuresis, or temper displays. In the second place, in later years there may be a tendency toward delinquency. The child who has not learned to deny his wishes or to curb his violent temper in the face of frustration is sooner or later certain to run into conflict with the demands of society and find himself driven to violent acts which society cannot condone.

The overindulged child, however, may make up for all of these character limitations by having more than average resourcefulness and assertiveness and an exaggerated self-regard. He is anything but docile and submissive. He may annoy by exploring drawers and cupboards, but at least he is not characterized by backwardness and bashfulness. This aggressiveness may be in part a defense against the smothering quality of excessive or insincere love.

The overindulged child has poor social adjustment. He is known as the child with bad manners, the impolite child, the child who will say the saucy thing and who will be rude and boorish. He is also known as the undisciplined child, and parents and teachers call him disobedient. When they make a request of him, he will obey it or not according to his whim and if it is something that he finds disagreeable, he may become impudent when an attempt is made to coerce him. With other children he is demanding, bossy, selfish, cocky, and a show-off.

Parents frequently find that children whom they have overindulged when very young will show feeding difficulties. These children may refuse to eat on a schedule, and a mother may find it difficult to persuade her son to come in to his meals from his play. In some cases they offer resistance to eating and need to be fed or coaxed to eat their meals or the particular food which the mother considers essential. These children may develop food fads and may crave sweets inordinately, while they turn away from other foods with marked disgust and put up strong resistance against eating. Although

sometimes this resistance to eating may be a child's reaction to parental rejection—endeavoring to secure the parent's concern and attention at the point at which the parent is most sensitive—more frequently, perhaps, eating difficulties grow out of overindulgence. These children frequently are untidy, leaving to others the responsibility of keeping things in order and showing their destructive impulses by their disorder.

Excessive gratification by the parents may also lead to precocity in sexual development. We have already seen that sexual expression may be accelerated by rejection, as the child finds that he can secure substitute satisfactions by self-stimulation. In quite a different way the child who receives excessive petting from a parent is overstimulated sexually and may demand more and more of such stimulation. Normally he wishes this stimulation from the person who gave it originally; but if it is not forthcoming, he may turn toward self-gratification, and just as the child who has received excessive gratification may not know how to curb his aggressive tendencies, so in adolescence he may not have any way of putting the brakes on his erotic tendencies which may show an early development and expression. Since he has not learned the necessity for inhibiting his desires and has low frustration tolerance, he may find no external or internal hindrance to experimenting with sexual behavior and abstracting what pleasure he can from such experience. When adolescence is reached, the newborn demands find no internal brake and the overindulged adolescent may be known as precocious in early adolescence and as "wild" in later years. Moreover, the parent who stimulates erotic ardor is unable completely to satisfy the impulses which are aroused. In our society a mother can not become in all respects a wife to her son. Perhaps the same doting mother actually prevents her son from having love affairs by showing her jealousy or annoyance. The young man who is neither completely satisfied erotically by his mother nor permitted to find satisfaction outside the family is almost certain to suffer grave conflicts and is a candidate for

mental illness. If his aroused erotic desires cannot be satisfied he may experience them only as pain and anxiety and he may therefore repress them in later life.

Strange as it may seem, overindulged children who show these irresponsible, infantile, spoiled traits, instead of being without conscience, often are burdened with more feelings of guilt and unworthiness than the average child. Since punishment is not forthcoming from parents to the overindulged child, there is not infrequently the necessity for self-punishment. Much of the wild, reckless, and unconventional behavior of the overindulged child may be attributed to his demands for punishment, and his behavior becomes so extreme only because his overindulgent parents are slow in taking him to task. They have so repressed their own aggressiveness that a large amount of stimulation is required to arouse it in them. For this reason the overindulged child may frequently be so extremely rebellious and aggressive that his behavior necessitates punishment by a somewhat hesitant parent.

Further, the child who has been overindulged is ill-prepared to share his place in the family with brothers and sisters who may come along. Since he has been surfeited with attentions and advantages from his parents, he finds it more than ordinarily hard to have to share these attentions with a brother or a sister, and rivalries may be especially fierce and severe for the child who has been overindulged. Finally, he is prevented from making permanent and satisfying attachments with others. Since his mother has monopolized his affectional relationships, he tends to be fixated on her and does not learn to experience pleasure with other people.

### *DYNAMIC FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH EXCESSIVE LOVE*

#### IMMEDIATE FACTORS

The tendency to surfeit a child with love is usually found when a marriage relationship is unsatisfactory and a parent is

starved for lack of normal affectional relationships with the spouse. This tendency is to be noted more frequently with wives than with husbands, perhaps because affectional relationships mean more to women than to men. A man frequently can find in other persons, or in his work or hobbies, substitutes for a warm affectional relationship in marriage, whereas a woman may have more difficulty in finding substitutes and it may be more natural for her to look to her children to satisfy her needs. Sometimes parental indulgence follows when sexual relations are unsatisfying. However, it is probably true that the husband fails to satisfy as much or more by being unappreciative and being too much engrossed in his own affairs than by failing to satisfy sexually. When a husband's work puts extraordinary demands on his time and energies, the wife may be left more or less to her own devices and may find it easy to devote herself to her children. It is especially true when the husband, even if he has the time, is so self-centered that he fails to notice and appreciate his wife. A woman may be forced to seek excessive companionship with her children when other social contacts are unobtainable.

Sometimes overindulgence is a direct wish of one parent to hurt the other. Giving to a child more than he needs or more than is good for him may be a way of arousing jealousy or resentment in the other parent, and even when it is obvious that what is being done for the child is inimical to the child's best interests, the distress which this causes the other parent may be something that is unconsciously planned and wished for.

Sometimes this state of affairs is found when the husband is absent or dead and the wife gives her whole love to her child or children. This state of affairs is discussed more fully in the chapter entitled "Special Family Situations" (see pp 103 ff.).

Relatives may also express excessive affection for a child, and overindulgence may come from a doting grandmother or aunt. Mrs. G, whose husband died, has taken a position as a

secretary to a high-powered executive in the city. During the day she leaves her two children in the care of her mother, who must get the children off to school, provide them with lunch at noon, and be at home when the children return from school in the afternoon. Mrs. G's mother tends to be a little lax with the children. They have learned that by a variety of tricks and stratagems they can coax out of her almost anything that they wish. Because they are so assertive with regard to what food they will or will not eat, she goes out of her way to prepare tempting dishes and desserts for them. It would seem as though the superego of a person which apparently is strong enough when she is bringing up her own children becomes softened and weakened with advancing years and the necessity for being firm passes away when the children are no longer her own but her daughter's. Tendencies toward making people comfortable and wanting to ease their way of life come in to take the place of the sterner qualities of a younger person. Possibly there may sometimes be more specific dynamic factors operating, such as the grandmother's indulgence serving as a defense against both real and fantasied criticism by her daughter for any severity or discipline she might show to the children.

#### PERSONALITY AND UNCONSCIOUS FACTORS IN PARENTAL OVERINDULGENCE

However, in all the above instances, there will be found, in addition to the immediate factors, deeper personality needs which cause a parent to overindulge a child.

The first of these deeper factors is the displacement of a parent's love for her own parent of the opposite sex. Just as we found that in rejection there may be a displacement of the parent's hate for her own parent of the same sex onto the child, so the child may provide his mother (or father) with an opportunity for loving in reality another surrogate of the parent of the opposite sex (in addition to the mate) which hitherto has been permitted only in fantasy. If there is a pro-

nounced homosexual component in the personality of either parent, this may lead to an overattachment to a child of the same sex.

Excessive love for a child may also be compensation for feelings of deprivation carried over from the childhood of the parent. A parent who as a child was, or felt herself to be, deprived of love and the tokens of love may have had fantasies of what she would do when she had a child of her own. These fantasies may have persisted in womanhood, when in reality she can identify herself with her own child and surfeit it with the love which she felt had been denied her. It is as though a parent said to herself, "Since life was so unkind to me when I was a child, I am going to be particularly careful to see that my own children have a happier time of it." Consequently, from the very beginning this mother goes out of her way to ease the path of development of her children, to supply them with every kind of advantage, and to deny them no wish. In such a case parental narcissism is born again through the child. What the parent as a child wished for herself she repeats by wishing for her own child and, so far as circumstances will permit, will try to see that these advantages and pleasures can be made real for her child. Such a parent is reliving her own history and trying to bring to pass in reality the experiences which she could only have in fantasy in her own childhood.

A third and common mechanism at work in causing a parent to express excessive affection toward a child is reaction formation against hate for the child. This combination of unconscious hate and overexpression of affection is commonly found. Not only is it unseemly and socially reprehensible to show too openly one's deep-seated enmity toward a child, but such an attitude would conflict with the superego tendencies carried down from early childhood learnings. One sees in rejection ways in which the hostility of a parent finds direct expression in relationships with the child; but in the case of parents who are more than ordinarily refined these



hostile feelings seem dangerous and difficult to tolerate, so they are handled by exactly the opposite tendencies, which show themselves in overindulgence.

The reaction formation of overindulgence helps to assuage feelings of guilt which a parent may have acquired as a result of the unconscious hate tendencies. A parent who has surfeited a child with love as a result of these dynamic factors can be recognized because of the compulsive nature of the love, which is grossly exaggerated and highly inappropriate. Toys and advantages are heaped on the child out of all proportion to the family's economic means, or the parent surrounds a child with protections which are out of all proportion to the dangers. By these devices a parent is actually frustrating or harming the child by methods which usually are thought to have exactly the opposite intent.

Overindulgence may come about by a more indirect route. For instance, a mother who feels guilty over unconscious hostility which she has at some previous time felt toward her parents (or sibling) may manage her guilt by the reaction formation of becoming extremely generous and sympathetic toward most people. She is overgenerous to her child and avoids denying it pleasure, thus making reparation for the hate and hostility of years ago.

Excessive love may also be a reaction formation against the fantasied results of the projection of hate. A parent who feels extremely guilty and unworthy may manage tendencies toward self-abasement by projecting her hostility onto the child. Then in return, fearing the child's counterhostility, there is an attempt to buy off the child's hostility with love and kisses. In this syndrome the outstanding observable attitude is the parent's fear of the child. The parent is afraid that the child will criticize her, ridicule her, shame her in public, or use devious devices of blackmail; but in any case the parent may respond by appeasement policies. The attitude of such a parent is not unlike the attitude of certain nations who try to ward off through international trade and other solemn agree-

ments the warlike tendencies of threatening neighbors. As Deutsch says, "Women who are under the constant pressure of lurking guilt feelings, and who are prone to obsessional-neurotic and depressive reactions, often allow their children to develop tyrannic claims from the beginning of their lives and actually to oppress them by their demands. We are familiar with the idea of 'His Majesty the Child.'" <sup>1</sup>

Sometimes overindulgence seems to be related to identification with a clinging parent. It is as though a pattern had been established which must be repeated in the next generation. This is almost the opposite of the last point. Here we find that a parent who has been overindulged as a child will wish to continue the same relationship with her own child through identification with her parent. Whereas in her childhood, she may have been rebellious and wild as a result of overindulgence, she may show the reverse tendency and become exceedingly submissive and pliable in the hands of her own children.

Sex factors also undoubtedly operate in some cases of overindulgence. For instance, the mother who in her own childhood had strong wishes to be a boy may develop reaction formation against these tendencies and adopt the opposite pattern of becoming extremely passive, submissive, and pliable. When her children come along she may find it impossible to deny their requests because to do so would mean unconsciously to play a masculine role.

Or a father may find that the feminine component in his personality seeks expression by tendencies toward overindulgence of his children. It is as though he felt a similar need for reaction formation against the strong aggressive, masterful characteristics which he displays in his business dealings, so with members of his family he finds satisfaction in being generous and indulgent.

<sup>1</sup> Helene Deutsch, *Psychology of Women*, Vol II, pp. 269, 270 New York: Grune and Stratton, 1945.

# 4

## PARENTAL OVERPROTECTION AN EXPRESSION OF PARENTAL ANXIETY

OVERPROTECTION AND oversolicitousness by a parent are expressions of fears, anxieties, and worries which seem to concentrate in one way or another in the handling of the child. Mrs. H has been overprotecting her son Bob since he was a baby. Scarlet fever when he was four left him with a rheumatic heart and he has had to be careful about overexertion and exposure. Mrs. H could only separate from him tearfully on his first day at school and watched for him in the school yard when school was over. She has to restrict him in his play for fear his heart condition may be exacerbated, and he has never been permitted to indulge in rough contact sports. As a result, Bob is known as a very nice child, polite and cooperative, but entirely too dependent, lacking in assertiveness and resourcefulness, and somewhat retiring in nature. Some of Mrs H's fears may actually be quite unrelated to the child. A parent may be concerned over his own future, may be beset by economic worries, may fear for the safety of his job or his position with his peers. These anxieties, which the parent cannot express too openly, may be displaced into anxieties about the child.

### *EXPRESSION OF OVERPROTECTION AND OVER- SOLICITOUSNESS BY PARENT*

The worries a parent may have for a child seem to be legion. In the first place, a parent may be concerned over a

child's health. The mother may worry lest the child fall ill or even die (which may be related to death wishes and latent hostility and rejection). She may worry over the child's safety, and while he is away at school she may fantasy that he will be struck by an automobile on the way home or that he will be kidnaped or that he will be hurt by another child. Some parents worry lest they are neglecting their child. This frequently takes the form of an obsession that the child is not receiving the proper education, so the parent flutters about the school or enters the child in an expensive private school, determined that he shall receive the best advantages.

Frequently parents worry because they fear their children may not be normal. Parents will bring their child to the psychological clinic for a mental test for the sole purpose, apparently, of gaining reassurance that he is mentally normal. School progress seems to be one of the major worries of parents. Some parents, who fear that their child will turn out to be worthless, will never become independent, or will "go to the dogs" and become delinquent, become highly disturbed if a child picks up even a penny which does not belong to him. This seems to be the case especially in those situations in which the husband is dead or where there is a divorce and the mother has responsibility for the children, or even in cases where the responsibility for the family planning and management rests heavily on the mother. Somehow she feels not quite up to the task of rearing a boy successfully alone and feels that masculine discipline is necessary in order to make a boy amount to something. To feel that their child may become immoral is a common fear among parents. Some mothers have a morbid fear that their child will have sex experiences in one form or another. Mothers will hedge their adolescent daughters about with all sorts of protections and will caution them against vague dangers from strange men.

Some parents worry because their child does not seem to be able to hold his own with other children. Mrs. I, for instance, says that her boy, Everett, is constantly being picked

on by other children. When he goes skating, other children will manage to bump into him and knock him down, and when the snow comes and there is coasting the other children will delight in blocking his flight down the hill and making him turn aside. They will snatch his cap and tantalize him until he shakes with anger. Mrs. I is much concerned over Everett's inability to stand up for himself. She has sent him to the Y.M.C.A. to take boxing lessons and his father has tried to interest him in manly sports; but the more they try to develop self-reliance in him, the more he is picked on by other children.

Some parents fear that their child will not take responsibility and others worry considerably because they have difficulty in exacting obedience from the child, as though a child were expected to jump, like a robot, in response to the most insignificant bidding. Still other parents become highly concerned over a child's improper language and are excited when the child brings home some obscene or profane word whose meaning he may only dimly sense.

These fears and worries on the part of the parent become translated into other parental attitudes. Maternal overprotection has been the subject of exhaustive study by David Levy<sup>1</sup> and the succeeding analysis follows lines suggested by him. A parent may react to her anxiety by developing excessive contact with the child. She holds and cuddles him, as an infant, more than is necessary or desirable, and keeps him ever at her side in childhood. This excessive contact may be continued into later years. Prolongation of breast feeding is a second method by which a parent reacts to her anxieties. This is in sharp contrast with the early termination of breast feeding which characterizes parental rejection. Indeed, it is believed that the duration and manner of breast feeding is a very reliable index of parental attitude toward the child, in the early years, at least. A parent may prevent the child from

<sup>1</sup> D. M. Levy, *Maternal Overprotection*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1943.

growing up by assuming responsibilities which wiser parents give over to the child at the appropriate time. A mother may continue to feed her child by spoon and cup and will assume full responsibility for his dressing, undressing, and bathing until well on into childhood. All of these attentions by parents, if continued too long, may serve to allay their anxieties, but they also delay the child's social maturation.

A parent may prevent in other ways the development of social maturity and independent behavior. The parent who is overanxious regarding health may hedge the child about with all sorts of precautionary measures. She may enforce a strict health and dietary schedule by insisting that the child eat the exact quantity of food set before him, or she will set rigid hours for going to bed. There may be overemphasis on cleanliness in an attempt to avoid contagion, until the child's life is made miserable by constant washing of hands and putting on of fresh clothing. Sometimes parents isolate their child from other children for fear that he will catch infectious diseases, and this can be carried to such an extent that the child's social development is actually impeded.

When a parent is anxious about real or imaginary dangers he may protect a child by a variety of safeguards even to the extent of depriving him of normal play activities. Cases are not uncommon in which the parent exercises close supervision over the child's play activities and follows the child around from street to playground to make sure that he does not take unnecessary hazards. In one case that was studied, the father would wait outside the school every afternoon with his young son's sweater, which the boy was required to put on as soon as he emerged from the building so that he might not take cold, and then he was required to take his father's hand so that he could cross streets in safety.

A common method of prolonging childish behavior is to take responsibility for the child's school homework. Many a parent sits down with a child, evening after evening, and in a not too chummy or too companionable way recites for the

child what the child himself should be reading and will hear him repeat what he has learned. Sometimes, instead of helping him personally, the mother will try to buy school progress by hiring a tutor to coach the child in reading or arithmetic. Parents have even attempted by this method to purchase their son's entrance into college.

In a general sense, modern conditions of urban living fit into these parents' purposes by depriving the child of an opportunity of developing responsibility. In a more simple, rural society, where the family must produce much that is consumed, many responsibilities devolve on the child. He is required to bring in the cows at night, to gather eggs, to churn the butter, to feed the hens. In a modern urban apartment, however, parents usually are hard pressed to find real tasks which will enable their children to develop a sense of responsibility. The milk and the newspaper are delivered at the door and the superintendent gets the steam heat up long before the family is awake. All functions are so highly organized, with the division of labor, that nothing except trivia is left for the child.

#### *CHILD'S RESPONSE TO PARENTAL ANXIETY, OVERPROTECTION, OVERSOLICITOUSNESS*

The main outcome of these expressions of overprotection by parents is the child's failure to grow up. Where so much is done for the child and he is hedged about by so many protections, he does not need to learn to fend for himself. Lafore<sup>2</sup> found that children who were most often cautioned scored low on resourcefulness. To the extent that things are done for the child, he is deprived of the opportunity of learning to do them himself. So long as a child is fed by others, he has no need to learn to feed himself. So long as buttons are fastened and shoestrings tied by a mother or nurse, a child has no need

<sup>2</sup> G. G. Lafore, *Practices of Parents in Dealing with Preschool Children*, p. 142. Child Development Monograph No. 31. New York. Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1945.

to learn these skills. Sometimes a child matures earlier, at least in these simple skills, when in a large family he is left to work them out by himself. Where the growth process is not made attractive or necessary, it simply does not take place.

Again, an overprotected child remains overdependent and helpless. He continues to depend on other persons, particularly adults, to help him with his tasks and to assist him with his difficulties. The child who is given overprotection fails to develop responsibility. If his mother takes the responsibility which should have been given him by slow stages all through childhood he learns to make demands on others. He expects other people to be responsible for his actions, opinions, thoughts, and achievement. It is easy to shirk tasks, to find excuses, to put blame on others, and to leave it to others to cover up the mistakes he makes. Such a child is incapable of asserting or exerting himself, and when challenges come along or difficulties confront him, he is unable to meet them but must pass the responsibility over to others. When school tasks seem difficult, the overprotected child will easily give up and expect someone to come to his rescue. A close inspection will show that the helpless child in school usually comes from a home in which fond parents have done so much for him that he has never learned to take responsibility himself.

Further, children who are overprotected become withdrawn and seclusive because they are so accustomed to adult society, and particularly the society of their parents, that they, like one-man dogs, find these relationships wholly satisfactory and not only are uninterested in making contacts with other people but actually seem frightened by them.

The overprotected child has poor social habits when with other children. He does not know how to play with them in a natural give-and-take manner. He frequently wants to lead if he is to play at all, and he is afraid of rough sports. Indeed, the overprotected child may develop schizoid tendencies so that withdrawal becomes pronounced, even pathological.

The child who is too much with adults can sometimes be



recognized because of his mature language and excellent vocabulary. David Levy<sup>3</sup> presents evidence to indicate that overprotected children tend in general to do well in school, although there are well-known exceptions to this rule, and to be better in language activities than in number activities, the latter requiring closer application and drill than the overprotected children are encouraged to give. The overprotected child frequently develops a fondness for reading. The greater linguistic abilities of overprotected children have been ascribed by Levy<sup>4</sup> to the child's close association with the mother, his identification with her, the absence of competing groups and of influences which might decrease his receptivity to adult language.

On the other hand, the overprotected child may develop poor work habits and become dawdling and dilatory with his work. Frequently he is careless and untidy, makes errors without taking pains to check on the correctness of his results, puts off tasks until the last possible moment, and so on through the whole gamut of irresponsible work and study habits so well known in school.

A fourth tendency to be observed in overprotected children is a certain degree of submissiveness and docility. The overprotected child may be observed as an obedient child, a little automaton who is extremely sensitive to the wishes and desires of his parents. As we shall presently see, the factor which is responsible for this submissiveness on the part of the child is the parent's aggressiveness and dominance in enforcing his safety rather than too much affection given him by the parent.

Finally, the overprotected child develops a battery of well-known feelings of insecurity. He is almost certain to take over some of the anxiety which is the basis of the parent's attitude

<sup>3</sup> D. M. Levy, "Relation of Maternal Overprotection to School Grades and Intelligence Tests" *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 3: 26-34, January 1933.

<sup>4</sup> D. M. Levy, *Maternal Overprotection*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1943

toward him. He is beset by feelings of inferiority, inefficiency, and inadequacy. These feelings are known by adults to be among the most depressing and poignant of feelings with regard to the self. To the extent that the child is not given an opportunity of learning to take care of himself, of being self-reliant, independent, and responsible, he develops feelings of inferiority. The overprotected child tends to lack courage and to be timid, fearful, cowardly, and apprehensive. He lacks self-confidence, and when entrusted with some responsibility, approaches it with diffidence. The rejected child also is usually found to have feelings of inferiority. These feelings, however, grow out of his lack of security, from inadequate love and support, whereas the feelings of inferiority of the overprotected child are derived from the fact that he has been denied opportunity of acquiring skills and has been made to adopt an overcautious attitude toward himself and his relation to the world.

*DYNAMIC FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH PARENTAL  
ANXIETY, OVERPROTECTION, AND  
OVERSOLICITOUSNESS*

IMMEDIATE FACTORS

David Levy <sup>5</sup> has pointed out a number of conditions which are calculated to arouse the mother's anxiety concerning her child. These are all apart from and in addition to the general conditions of anxiety which were mentioned at the beginning of this section. In the first place, a woman's desire for a child may have been thwarted. Perhaps the marriage has been for long an unfruitful one, or child bearing has been postponed for many years for economic or other reasons. During the passage of time such a woman's maternal longings have been ungratified. Naturally, when a child does come, particularly if

<sup>5</sup> D. M. Levy, "Paper on Maternal Overprotection", read before the Second Colloquium on Personality Investigation *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 9 904, March 1930.

the longing has been great, he may be prized and cared for overzealously. If there has been previous conception, with a miscarriage or an abortion, whether voluntary or involuntary, when later a child actually does come he may be so prized that the mother will tend to overprotect him. Or perhaps an earlier child had been born, but died through illness or accident. In all these cases, the postponement of the coming of the child has tended to raise the mother's longing and to increase the anxiety.

Then there are cases in which the pregnancy has been difficult or the labor long, painful, or complicated, and the experience has aroused in the mother anxiety which was not immediately resolved by the birth of the child and which tended to complicate the early days of rearing. When the child becomes a hazard for survival the incentive for overprotection becomes exceedingly strong. Perhaps the child was born with or has developed some physical or mental handicap, or perhaps the child has had early serious or long-continued illness, requiring constant nursing on the part of the mother. If the mother has become overconcerned with a child and has been forced to devote extra energy to caring for him, this concern may carry over into later years and the child may always be treated as a tender plant which must be protected with more than usual precautionary care.

Those instances in which a child is born with mental inferiority are particularly pathetic. Sometimes the retardation may be congenital, or it may be caused by a birth injury which has damaged certain areas of the cerebral cortex and has prevented the normal mental development of the child. As was pointed out earlier, there is, almost of necessity, unconscious rejection of such a child because he is far from being acceptable. But as is so often the case, such a child is recognized as more than ordinarily helpless and the parents' love runs out toward it with a superabundance of affection. To the extent that the child becomes backward and helpless, the parent surrounds him with more than average care. When there are

other children in the family, this becomes a particularly unfortunate state of affairs because the normal children in the family are, of necessity, affected by the extra affection which the defective child receives and by the necessity which most parents feel of keeping the matter from public scrutiny.

Unfortunately the only child in a family is liable to overprotection. Since he is the sole child he becomes more valuable and precious and consequently actually is protected more than if the family were large. He is also destined to receive all of the parents' emotional response, and if this is one of anxiety, the full force of this anxiety must be borne by him.

Similarly, the ordinal position with other children in a family may work toward overprotection of certain of the children. For instance, the first child tends to be overprotected as contrasted with children who come later. The first child is an experiment. For a year at least, and usually longer, he is the only child and receives his parents' concentrated attention. When later children come the parents do not feel so alarmed at every accident and, having reared one child successfully, they feel less anxiety about the minor traumatic happenings which occur in the lives of their succeeding children. However, the last child, particularly when there is a space of several years after the preceding children, may again be in a position to be overprotected. Such a child may come when the mother's reproductive powers are waning, and, realizing that he is the last child, she may shower excessive affection on him. Then, since he is the baby of the family not only to the parents but to the other children, the last-born child may receive more than his due share of waiting on and attention.

If the parents have wanted a child of a certain sex and if in successive births the unwanted sex has been the one to arrive, when the child of the desired sex finally does come, he too may be overprotected. For instance, Mrs. J gave birth to four successive daughters. Each time both Mr. and Mrs. J hoped for a boy and each time they swallowed their disappointment and were glad to welcome another girl into the family. Fi-

nally, however, a boy came and they were overjoyed. All the hopes and plans which they had for a boy, but which had to be so long postponed, could now be realized. In addition, of course, there were four girls in the family who were also overjoyed and the little fellow became surfeited with attention and care far beyond his due, which ultimately prevented him from attaining complete masculinity.

Still another similar situation is to be found in the case of certain adopted children. The adopted child is reputedly a rejected child, particularly when he has to compete with any own children in the adopting family. But if a couple have long been childless and have finally resorted to adoption in order to satisfy their desires for a family, this adopted child may be surfeited by the same overprotection as in any case where the coming of the child has long been postponed.

There are also cases in which the marriage relationship itself seems to be none too secure. Perhaps the husband gives signs of infidelity, or perhaps the original ardor of love has cooled and hostilities have developed. In such cases the mother may manage her anxiety by overprotecting her children and, as the link with her husband seems to be weakening, she attempts to strengthen the tie with her children by a surcharge of care.

Then, too, there are cases in which the overprotection of a child has arisen from rivalry between the mother and the grandmother. Where a grandmother lives with the family, or is a near-by neighbor, and has a tendency to spoil the child, the mother may react by overprotecting the child herself as though she could not let another person outdo her in being good to him and in showering him with advantages.

Finally, many mothers become overprotective as a way of meeting the inevitable necessity of eventually giving up and losing their children as they grow up, become independent and self-supporting, and leave the shelter of the family. As Deutsch points out,<sup>6</sup> such a mother gladly sacrifices herself

<sup>6</sup> Helene Deutsch *Psychology of Women*, Vol. II, p. 318. New York. Grune and Stratton, 1945.

for her children on condition that they are thereby made happy and contented. She suffers separation only on condition that her children be protected and fortunately situated. She throws round her children a kind of protection against the changes that they may meet, only to make them unprepared to meet the real changes and hardships in life away from home.

This has become a lengthy recital of possible conditions which would lead to overprotection in the family. Underlying all of these, however, is some special cause for anxiety on the part of one or both parents which they try to control by overdoing the business of being a parent.

#### PERSONALITY AND UNCONSCIOUS FACTORS IN PARENTAL OVERPROTECTION

The immediate factors which have been catalogued above might seem to the reader to be sufficient to explain the parent's attitude toward a child. In every case, however, there undoubtedly are personality factors which would tend to make the parent particularly liable to anxiety. It is as though these immediate factors were excuses or rationalizations for the expression of anxiety which would have appeared anyway at the least threat arising in the parent's life. In most cases it will be found that the parent's present insecurity grows out of his or her own childhood rejection.

One obvious dynamic factor which is operating is that the parent may wish to protect a child against his or her own unconscious hostility. As in the case of most unconscious dynamisms, it is difficult for the reader who has not had clinical experience or who is unfamiliar with the processes of the unconscious to believe that a mother can feel hostility toward a helpless, sickly, deformed, or defective child. The whole tenor of popular attitude is that a parent will project a surcharge of love and devotion onto a helpless child. This is true in actuality; but the number of times that this surcharge of love has underlying it an anxiety reaction against unconscious hostility is commonly not realized. This hostility, of course,

may not be for the child himself but may be a displacement of attitudes toward persons in earlier periods in life, as has been set forth in detail in the chapter on "Rejection."

Perhaps the overprotected child has been identified with some earlier, lost love object. For instance, the mother may identify the child with one of her own siblings who died when she was a child, a sibling toward whom she was deeply attached and for whom this attachment has magnified itself in fantasy over the intervening years. This child then takes the place of the lost sibling and the intense unconscious longing for the lost loved object may be responded to by overprotection. This will be doubly the case if there is also a component of guilt for unconscious hostility toward the lost sibling; the present overprotection will then be a reaction formation against this long repressed hostility. Of course the lost loved object might have been a parent instead of a sibling, but the dynamic factors would be the same in either case.

Silberpfennig <sup>7</sup> reports cases in which the anxiety shown by mothers toward their children, particularly concerning health, are connected with the mother's own anxiety concerning herself and the soundness of her own body.

Sometimes the overprotective attitude is found in a sibling rather than in a parent. For instance, one child in a family may adopt an overprotective attitude toward another, again as a reaction formation against hostility. An older child, who, on the birth of a sibling, has suffered intense pangs of jealousy, accompanied by wishes to injure the younger child, may master these wishes by adopting a protective attitude. The older daughter, for instance, becomes a little mother to her newborn brother and pleads for opportunity to feed him and to take care of him whenever possible during the day.

The mother may develop overprotective attitudes toward one child in a family because of guilt felt for the rejection of another child. For instance, Mrs. K makes it very hard for

<sup>7</sup> Judith Silberpfennig, "Mother Types Encountered in Child Guidance Clinics," *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 11, 475-484, July 1941.

her oldest son George and puts considerable pressure on him to succeed in school. She is apparently never satisfied by what he does and is always demanding more of him than he is able to accomplish. This pressure is accompanied by all sorts of deprivations and punishments. A younger boy, Arthur, who was born four years later, is his mother's favorite. It would seem as though all the care and affection which she is so sparing of toward the older child she lavishes on the younger one. Naturally this increases the resentment and antagonism of the older boy, who feels that he is being unfairly treated.



# 5

## PARENTAL OVERAUTHORITY AND OVERSTRICTNESS

### EXCESS OF PARENTAL CONTROL

JUST AS overindulgence implies weakness, yielding, and submissiveness on the part of parents, so it is not uncommon to find that the opposite tendencies of strictness, rigidity, and domination imply excessive control. These latter tendencies are commonly found in overprotection, and an overprotecting parent will usually be a dominating parent. It is possible, however, to separate the anxiety factor in overprotection, which was emphasized in the analysis given in the last chapter, and the authority and dominance factor, which is discussed in the present chapter.

Like overindulgence, overstrictness is an ambivalent form of expression. In the first place, the strict parent may be showing love for the child, for at least such a parent can usually rationalize his attitude by saying that what he is doing is for the good of the child. On the other hand, cases of overstrictness by parents easily betray the element of hate. The parent who is strict not only is so for the child's good, but also denies the child pleasure and hurts or punishes the child by the very severity of his authority.

Sometimes one finds a father or mother enthroned on a chair of state and governing the family with a strong mind although unable to move about and have a direct hand in affairs. Such a one is the grandmother described in Mazo de la Roche's *Jalna*:

In spite of her great age, she still bore trace of having been a handsome woman. Her fierce eyes still were bright under her shaggy reddish eyebrows. Her nose, defiant of time, looked as though it had been moulded by a sculptor who had taken great pains to make the sweep of the nostrils and arch of the bridge perfect . . .

"What's this going on?" she demanded. "What's the child been doing, Piers?"

"Climbing up Rag's back, Gran. He nearly threw him downstairs. Renny promised him a licking next time he did it, and now he's letting him off."

Her face turned crimson with excitement. She looked more like a parrot than ever. "Let him off, indeed!" she cried. "There's too much letting off here. That's what's the matter. I say flog him. Do you hear, Renny? Flog him well. I want to see it done. Get a cane and flog him!"<sup>1</sup>

#### EXPRESSION BY PARENT

The overauthoritative and overstrict parent is forbidding, critical, resisting. The word "don't" is frequently on the parent's tongue and, when the child has done something of which the parent does not approve, there will be criticism or punishment. This parent adopts a full measure of responsibility for the child which is the exact opposite of neglect, as described in the chapter on "Rejection." This parent is hard on the child and holds him to standards which are unsuited to him. The child is forced to learn to feed himself, to dress himself, to care for his possessions in an orderly and neat fashion, and to take responsibility for carrying through tasks and getting to places on time. A parent may require hard work of the child and give him responsibility at even an early age. This attitude on the part of the parent is probably more prevalent in family life of rural people than it is in the more sophisticated living of city dwellers. The Amish farmers of Eastern Pennsylvania, for instance, still believe that boys should be required to take up the responsibility of work on

<sup>1</sup> Mazo de la Roche, *Jalna*, pp. 29, 34. Boston. Little Brown and Company, 1927.

the farm even as early as six or seven years of age and these parents exercise strict supervision over their children. An Amish boy is required to meet certain vigorous standards of behavior, to obey without question, to do what is considered right on all occasions, and to avoid what is wrong. In particular, these parents will enjoin strictness with regard to sexual behavior, forbidding any kind of sexual play or curiosity or exploration.

Frequently, however, a mother uses more subtle methods of impressing her will on her family. Even though she may be small or slight and outwardly retiring as a person, actually she dominates, through force of character, by setting standards for the whole family. Sons and daughters come under her sway and acquire ego ideals from her insistent domination. The father in *Life with Father* was stubborn and blustery, but it was his quiet wife who really made the decisions for the family.

#### *CHILD'S RESPONSE TO OVERAUTHORITY AND OVERSTRICTNESS*

The principal characteristic of children whose parents are overstrict is submissiveness. The child of very strict parents tends to be docile, well behaved, well disciplined, courteous, polite, and amenable to authority. Although clinical experience and common observation verify this general tendency over and over again, there are some who would question this and would maintain that children of overauthoritative parents tend to be rebellious. The confusion here perhaps is between behavior and fantasy. It may happen that sometimes a child of overstrict parents may tend to feel rebellious, but even this is not the general rule; for it is typical of children of overstrict parents to repress hostile impulses and to become amenable to discipline. The feelings of hostility arise only when the discipline is of a hostile, rejecting nature. If the strictness is accompanied by evident fondness for and acceptance of the child, the child usually will respond by willing cooperation; but such a

child usually is characterized by considerable inhibition and lack of spontaneity.<sup>2</sup>

Overinhibition and submissiveness mean, among other things, that the child has introjected his parents' strictness, and he becomes strait-laced himself, with an overstrong superego.

Disturbances in the capacity to adjust, however, may develop in children of overstrict parents because decisions are made by the parents and enforced regardless of complaints or challenge on the part of the child. The child gradually loses the capacity to think through situations by himself and he becomes dependent on the judgment of his parents. Since he does what he is told rather than find ways of doing by himself, he loses the capacity for independent adjustment.

One meets this same tendency in the classroom. Teachers who are overstrict and dominating will find that the children in their classes temporarily lose their capacity for initiative and that the sharp edge of adaptability is blunted. They become passive and docile, with a high degree of submissive cooperation if the discipline is kindly, or with a smoldering resentment if it is unsympathetic.

In a similar fashion there is a disturbance in the capacity of these children to enjoy life. A child who is overworked, who is given a heavy load of responsibility in the family, who is tied into a tight harness to fit into the standards that his parents have set up, gradually loses the capacity to find pleasure. There is also a likelihood that sex life will be disturbed to the extent that the father or mother clamps down a tight lid on sexual exploration and sexual experience. On the other hand, the child of sympathetic and kindly parents introjects such inhibitions and in later adolescence will find himself afraid of his own capacities and impulses along sex lines.

Coupled with these tendencies toward submissiveness will go profound feelings of inferiority and inadequacy. Feelings

<sup>2</sup> L. H. Stein, "A Study of Overinhibited and Unsocialized-Aggressive Children. Part II. A Quantitative Analysis of Background Factors," *Smith College Studies in Social Work*, 15: 124, 125, 1944.

of inadequacy and inferiority have been mentioned as an outcome of several of the parent-child relationships which have previously been mentioned. Sometimes they arise because there is a failure of love, and the child feels deprived. Sometimes they grow out of the parent's anxiety, and the child feels insecure as he identifies himself with the insecurity of his parents. Sometimes he feels inferior because he has been kept infantile and overdependent, in which case feelings of inferiority develop because the child has been forced to adopt patterns of submissiveness in response to the overdominance of others. There are also likely to develop feelings of confusion and bewilderment. The child is not sure of himself. He has not won for himself a place in his world, but is at the beck and call of other persons. The child who is most sure of himself is the one who feels secure in his parents' affection, a fact which implies conversely that repressive overauthority and overcontrol by parents is coupled with a sensing on the part of the child that he is rejected.

*DYNAMIC FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH  
PARENTAL OVERAUTHORITY AND  
OVERSTRICTNESS*

IMMEDIATE FACTORS

Of the immediate factors which would account for strictness on the part of the parents, those that have already been listed in connection with parental overprotection apply here. To the extent that a mother is anxious concerning her child's health, safety, or welfare, to that extent she may tend to dominate him, and to exercise measures of safety and protection strictly.

PERSONALITY AND UNCONSCIOUS FACTORS

Sometimes one finds that a mother becomes the strong hand in a family because she was forced to accept undue responsibility in childhood. Mrs L's mother died when she was eight

years old, leaving her the eldest in a family of five children. Her father carried on as best he could by employing housekeepers, but a good deal of responsibility naturally fell on Edith. She became a little mother to the two smallest children in the family and as she grew older took responsibility for their clothes, their school, their church attendance, and the like. Naturally she denied herself many pleasures and had to leave school early because the family needed her care. Later on, when she had a family of her own, it was only natural that she should relive her childhood experiences and adopt attitudes of authority toward each of her children as they came along. In addition, the assumption of authority may represent an identification with a strict parent. Mrs. L, for instance, remembers her mother as an efficient housekeeper before her last illness. She remembers that when her mother spoke no one thought of disputing and that the household was orderly and smooth-running. When her mother died Mrs. L. felt particularly guilty for the times when she would have liked to disobey her or to attempt resistance, and it seemed to her that she must be as good a mother as her mother had been. She takes on herself more than normal authority over everything that happens in the family, and worries considerably lest her children do not turn out to have good characters or do not succeed in school.

A parent may project onto her child her own superego tendencies, and she may treat her child as her superego has treated her own basic impulses and drives. If she is an austere, puritanical person who has strict notions of what is acceptable behavior, she undoubtedly will hold these same standards for her children and impose on them the same ideals of what is right and wrong. If, as a child, she has been brought up to believe that a poor record in school is a disgrace to any self-respecting person, she is likely to hold the same attitude with regard to her own children and to preach high standards of school success day in and day out. Such a harsh, forbidding character will enforce inhibitions in two directions. First, she

will impose on her children the inhibitions of sex which govern her own behavior. Second, at the same time that she is vigorous in asserting herself with her children, she may lay down as a strict injunction to her children that it is wrong to strike or to injure.

As with the overindulgent parent, there are undoubtedly sex components which contribute to overstrictness. The overstrict mother, for instance, may have a masculine component in her character, a component which is aggressive and assertive, and this component may show itself in her handling of her children. On the other hand, the father may have tendencies of reaction formation and overcompensation against the feminine component in his personality. He may develop tendencies toward being gruff, assertive, and dominating toward his family, which, in a way, compensate for his lack of effectiveness and essential timidity in his dealings with others.

# 6

## PROJECTION OF PARENTAL AMBITION, PARENTAL OVERDEPENDENCE

### *PROJECTION OF PARENTAL AMBITION*

#### EXPRESSION BY PARENT

ANOTHER TYPE of parent-child relationship that is frequently met is the attempt by the parent to push his child. Usually, in our society at least, ambition for the child is mainly concentrated on school progress, and, if one is to judge by the complaints of parents who bring their children to clinics, this is one of the parents' greatest concerns. Most parents consider school important and with a zeal which they delegate to few other interests desire high achievement in school for their children. In the minds of most parents, schooling is related to worldly success, and statistics showing that the average income of college graduates is higher than that of those who have had less education seem to make a profound impression on the average father and mother. Sometimes mothers decide on some special talent in which they are anxious for their children to excel. Undoubtedly the marked success of child prodigies in music and other forms of art stimulate parents to wish for their children, and also for themselves, an equal amount of fame and publicity. Most parents today look forward to the possibility of providing their children with a college education. If in junior high school the son's marks begin to look discouraging, the difficulties of college entrance are already anticipated and tempestuous scenes may ensue. Some parents will attempt to put the screws on, some



will plead, some will nag, each according to his method will attempt to jack up the record which it is thought will be of so much importance for college entrance. Most parents would like their children to be bright. Mothers bring them to the psychological clinic in order to have their I.Q.'s computed in the hope that their children will be among the favored few.

#### CHILD'S RESPONSE TO PARENTAL AMBITION

A typical response of the child to the ambitious parent is resistance, usually of a passive kind. The pattern which may be seen over and over again, where a mother seems to be straining every energy toward having her son or daughter make a good school record, is for the child to give up all responsibility for accomplishment of this end. In school he is known as a dreamer who takes no interest in the work and no responsibility for getting his assignments in when required. So often the child is apathetic, good-natured perhaps, and amenable, but resistant with regard to school work. The more the mother pushes, the more the child leans back. However, not all children fall into this pattern. In some the resistance is more openly expressed, while still others fall in with their parents' insistence by obliging acquiescence. This acquiescence, however, again is of a peculiarly passive or docile kind and consists more in doing tasks according to the letter rather than the spirit of the assignment. Many children who have been given considerable pushing with regard to school learn subtle methods of avoiding the real mastery of their work.

#### DYNAMIC FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH PROJECTION OF AMBITION BY PARENT ONTO A CHILD

Usually, where the parent is overambitious for the child, the child embodies the cultural aspirations of the family. In many cases the parent has not gone through college or even through high school but was forced to discontinue schooling before his interests or economic necessity turned him elsewhere. He has looked forward to the time when a child of

his could have the advantages which his own family could not provide. It is probably only natural that a parent should want to live out his own aspirations through his children. Freud pointed to this fact in his first book. "It is easy to see how the father's suppressed desire for greatness is in his thoughts transferred to his children; one is inclined to believe that this is one of the ways by which the suppression of this desire (which becomes necessary in the course of life) is effected."<sup>1</sup>

This section is headed "Projection of Parental Ambition" because in so many cases—practically all—in which a parent has an overwhelming ambition, it is a projection of his own unfulfilled ambitions. The reason may be the more immediate fact that he was thwarted in the fulfillment of his own ambitions. However, it may go back to earlier factors, such as rivalry with one's own siblings. The mother, for instance, may continue in her own family the rivalry with her sister and want her son to make as good a record through school and into college as her sister's son has already made. The father may want his son to become as eminent as his own father was and will bring him up with this goal openly expressed.

Sex may enter here also. A mother may strive through her son for masculine attainment, which she has not achieved throughout her life because of her own sex. To have a son who succeeds may take away some of the stigma of her own feelings of inferiority. This ambition that mothers have for their sons is not something to be despised or underrated. As a matter of fact, many prominent men can attribute their success to the ambition which their mothers kindly and patiently projected onto them through their growing years.

#### OVERDEPENDENCE OF PARENTS

The tendency for parents to become overdependent on their children has not been discussed at any length in clinical

<sup>1</sup> Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*. Revised Edition, p 414. New York. The Macmillan Company, 1937.

or psychological literature, although it is a common observation that parents sometimes become very dependent on their children, particularly as a child is approaching adulthood. The following comments, therefore, are not based on clinical or experimental evidence, as is the rest of the material in this book, but on cursory observation and experience.

#### EXPRESSION BY PARENT

It sometimes happens that a mother will actually regress and become more dependent on her family as the children grow up. This sometimes is caused by her illness or physical incapacity. At the beginning, the mother will depend on the child to run errands, or to answer the doorbell or telephone. Later, however, as a child has learned to assume such small responsibilities, the mother is glad to pass more and more of her own responsibilities over to the child until the time comes when she actually seems to lean on the child for support. Such a mother may wheedle the child into waiting on her, or may force such servility by more strong-arm methods.

#### CHILD'S RESPONSE TO OVERDEPENDENCE OF PARENT

In line with the general tendency in these parent-child relationships for the child to fall in with the expressed parental attitude, it is common to find the child actually accepting the responsibility placed upon him. Naturally, if the child did not accept this responsibility, it would not be possible for the parent to pass it over. First of all, the child accepts responsibility in little things, small tasks around the house, tending the store during times when the parent must be attending to the meals, assuming responsibility for the poultry yard, or minding a younger brother or sister. In adolescence this responsibility is taken on still more willingly, with the result that it may be impossible for the child to secure emancipation from the parent. As the demands of the parent may become more and more insistent, the child may find that his

place in the family cannot easily be relinquished. Another possible outcome for the child will be the development of feelings of inferiority through identification with the parent. In this case the feeling of inferiority is not based on personal inadequacy but depends entirely on the process of identification. The child feels the same helplessness that the parent has already adopted and expresses.

#### DYNAMIC FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH OVERDEPENDENCE OF PARENTS

Among the immediate factors associated with and responsible for overdependence on the part of a parent the most common is actual illness which has incapacitated him and forced him to relinquish some of his responsibility. The parent who is suffering from a disability or an exhausting disease is perhaps forced to pass the reins over to some other person. We find such an attitude developing in the parent who is crippled or who is suffering from sensory defect, such as being hard of hearing or having poor eyesight. However, the crippled or defective parent may not always react by becoming dependent, but may, on the contrary, continue to exercise authority in spite of the handicap, as is well illustrated in the excerpts from *Jalna* on page 78.

Finally, one sometimes finds parents who are immature. Overindulged by their own parents, they did not learn to accept responsibility when children and they still remain childish after marriage. It is not uncommon in such circumstances to find a child in the family who assumes a dominating position and tends to make decisions and run the life of such a parent.

# 7

## PARENTAL AMBIVALENCE

### OVERPROTECTION OR OVERINDULGENCE AS A REACTION FORMATION AGAINST HOSTILITY

OVERINDULGENCE and overprotection frequently mask underlying rejection. To the casual observer it would appear that the overindulged child was the recipient of an overdose of love and fondness and the overprotected child the recipient of an overdose of care and protection. Actually, however, the very overindulgence and overprotection may conceal and at the same time less obviously express hate toward the child. The expression "killing by kindness" illustrates the dynamics at work. By the very excess of the parent's fond response the child is hurt and, to an extent, although perhaps unconsciously, this damage is intended by the parent. Practically every form of expression of parental overprotection can also represent in certain instances a disguised form of parental hostility. Overprotection which hinders the child's play for fear of accident, which prevents the child's doing his own homework for fear of failure, or limits the child's social contacts for fear of unwholesome influences, is preventing the child from maturing, developing independence, becoming socially adjusted, and enjoying normal activities and friendly relations. Overprotection may serve as a form of punishment and rejection in disguise.

#### *EXPRESSION BY PARENT*

The outstanding characteristic of this parental attitude is the inconsistency of the behavior. A parent will feel one way

toward a child today and another way tomorrow, or the parent may even turn about within a period of a few minutes and, after administering severe punishment or harsh discipline, or after depriving the child of some pleasure, overindulge the child with unnecessary pleasures or advantages or will become extremely overprotective.

In some cases the overprotection or the overindulgence alternates with hostility. First the parent gives expression to feelings of hate. Then guilt is aroused for being such a bad parent and there is an attempt to make reparation or atonement for the ill-temper by lavishing affection and protection on the child. In such instances the parent has not learned to show aggression without guilt, so that any form of discipline or correction of the child provokes anxiety. Such parents have never learned to tolerate their own aggression. On the other hand, sometimes the overprotection or the overindulgence includes an element of hostility. The child is hurt or is deprived by the very act of protection or indulgence. For instance, Mrs. M worries constantly lest Arthur get sick or have an accident. Arthur must bundle up in heavy clothing, with zippered leggings and leather helmet tied down under his chin early in the fall, and he must put these garments on whenever he goes out until late in the spring. His mother does not trust him to play alone outdoors for fear he may run into the street and be hit by a passing car. Consequently, he is not allowed to play outside by himself and, if he does play, he is under constant surveillance by the mother or the maid. Naturally Mrs. M believes that she is doing this out of her own concern for Arthur. At the same time there is an unconscious desire to deprive him of normal free play and to make him uncomfortable and to restrict his movements with the heavy winter clothing.

Mrs. N wants her little daughter, Elaine, to be a beauty. Even when Elaine was a baby, Mrs. N spent much time arranging her hair and buying beautiful clothes for her, so that from babyhood Elaine was always dressed exquisitely.

Even in the morning her dresses were starched and frilly and her hair was curled. Naturally Elaine felt proud of being a little lady and this helped her in a measure to feel superior to other children. However, she could not romp and get dirty like other children but had to play carefully and sedately. By and large, Elaine did not seem to mind this but there were occasions when she looked wistfully at the other children who were going on jaunts or excursions in a carefree way.

Sometimes these inconsistencies are shown by oscillations between overauthority and overindulgence. Sometimes the mother will be exceedingly strict and will fuss at the child for the least infraction of rules. A day later the rules seem to have been entirely forgotten and the child, sensing their relaxation, proceeds to violate them one after another. Suddenly something is broken or is torn and the mother is jolted back swiftly to her former scolding insistence. Henceforth, fresh rules are laid down and instant obedience is exacted. In such an atmosphere of inconsistency there is little wonder that a child may develop neurotic symptoms.

### *CHILD RESPONSE*

Ambivalence on the part of a parent in his relations with a child produces a high degree of emotional insecurity in the child. This is as true in primitive society as in our own. DuBois, who studied the people of Alor, found inconsistency of parental discipline a significant aspect of that culture. She states, "That a child may be placated and indulged one moment and struck or deserted in the next can scarcely create an image of a secure outer world."<sup>1</sup> Anxiety is the most generally descriptive term to apply to the state of a child who has been subjected to inconsistent parental behavior. The inconsistent parent creates the condition in a child similar to that created in a rat by the laboratory psychologist who forces closer and closer discrimination on a rat or actually creates

<sup>1</sup> Cora DuBois, *The People of Alor*. Minneapolis. The University of Minnesota Press, 1944.

confusion by inconsistent stimuli. Just as in the lower animals, so in a child inconsistency will arouse marked anxiety and neurotic responses. The child becomes exceedingly tense and may develop nervous habits of twitching or jerking or other neurotic patterns of behavior which can be described as non-adjustive. Sometimes a child who becomes afraid of his counterhostility in these situations will develop compulsive behavior, evidenced in counting, repetition of acts, overexactness, overpoliteness, and the like.

It is believed that antisocial characteristics and tendencies toward delinquency are caused more by parental ambivalence than by any other factor.<sup>2</sup> The mother who on the one hand is unable to deny gratification to a child, and on the other shows her displeasure in him by abrupt separation and severe punishments creates severe conflicts. The child who is over-indulged does not possess frustration tolerance and has not learned the necessity of waiting for gratification of his desires; then if in addition he is on other occasions frustrated and punished, an overwhelming hate is developed. The combination of unbridled desire with hate leads to antisocial trends. The development of neurotic traits in contrast to antisocial trends requires a certain degree of repression.

Ambivalence is another attitude which is almost certain to arouse feelings of inferiority in the child. Since the child does not know just where he stands with his parents and must be continually on his guard lest punishment fall on him for behavior which, only a moment ago, was condoned or even encouraged, his ego is severely threatened.

#### *DYNAMIC FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH PARENTAL AMBIVALENCE*

Parental ambivalence is clearly a reaction to guilt, usually for unconscious hostility toward the child. Fundamentally

<sup>2</sup> Kate Friedlander, "Antisocial Character," in *The Psychoanalytic Study of the Child*, Vol. I, pp. 189-203. New York International Universities Press, 1945.



the unconscious attitude of the parent toward the child is one of hostility, but the parent's superego is unable to accept this hostility and the conflict which results leads to feelings of guilt and unworthiness. In order to atone for this guilt, the parent feels he must make amends and consequently overdoes the business of being a good parent.

Overprotection which is a reaction formation against hostility can usually be recognized because it is overdone. The overprotection or the overindulgence becomes exaggerated as it goes far beyond the requirements of the situation. One reason that parental rejection is not more often recognized is that it tends to be disguised by an overlay of loving care. Most parents feel guilty about their hate tendencies and wish to hide from the world the fact that they have these feelings toward their child.

The second mechanism at work is parental anxiety lest something happen to the child, which again may be an outgrowth of fear of the parent's own unconscious hostility. Actually, perhaps unconsciously, the parent has fantasies in which the child is away or shows different characteristics, and perhaps he can see himself taking steps to bring some of these changes about. He becomes afraid of his own hostile feelings and in order to master them attempts to hide them by overprotection or overindulgence. Where these tendencies to hide hostile feelings are a reaction formation, they are likely to be of an obsessional nature on the part of the parent, showing themselves as emotionalized repetitions of the same warnings or safety measures taken toward the child, all of which are calculated unconsciously to allay anxiety which is aroused from the parent's own impulsive tendencies.

## 8

### COMBINATIONS OF PARENTAL ATTITUDES

THERE ARE certain combinations of parental attitudes which occur frequently enough to warrant special mention and which have been the subject of special scrutiny by clinical workers.

#### *FATHER REJECTING, MOTHER OVERPROTECTIVE*

The first of these is a combination of rejection by the father and overprotection by the mother. This combination of parental attitudes was noted by Aichhorn<sup>1</sup> in his study of delinquents and has also been commented on by David Levy.<sup>2</sup> The child responds to this particular combination by heightened revolt and rebellion in the family circle and later by rebellion to authority outside the family, which eventually will bring him into conflict with society and may lead to delinquency. Aichhorn describes this pattern in some detail. He finds that there is an oscillation of the child from one parent to the other. The child is angered by the severity and harshness of his father. He then turns to his mother, who tends to overprotect and overindulge him. Then the lack of firmness on her part permits his aggressive tendencies to rear themselves without check and leads to the rebellious tendencies which are fanned into flame by continued harshness on the part of his father.

<sup>1</sup> A. Aichhorn, *Wayward Youth*. New York: The Viking Press, 1935

<sup>2</sup> D. M. Levy, "On the Problem of Delinquency." *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 2: 197-211, 1932.

As has been indicated so often in this book, in cases where the child becomes afraid of his own aggressive tendencies he may repress them and build up reaction formations against them. In some cases the child will show marked tendencies toward withdrawal, shyness, and bashfulness. When a child comes into a clinic showing tendencies of being afraid of strangers, one finds so often that at home there is a father with little sympathy, who becomes impatient with the child, attempts to force him to his standards, whereas the mother is suffused with tender feeling toward the child, particularly when he is rebuked by the father.

In other cases, also, there is failure to adjust to reality, seen most prominently in children who fail to progress in school. Frequently in cases of difficulty with reading and spelling the lack of school progress seems to be a counter-aggressive measure on the child's part. Blanchard<sup>3</sup> tells of a nine-year-old boy for whom not learning to read was a disguised expression of hostility toward the mother who wanted him to be clever in this respect. In addition he identified his teachers with his mother and rebelled against learning to read in order to show again his hostility. Certain parts of school work, in fantasy, have an aggressive significance which, directed toward the father or the mother, becomes too dangerous and must be repressed. Blanchard describes a case in which a boy fantasies letters of the alphabet as having dangerous significance. "He talked of the letters he printed as if they were pictures of wild animals—a Q was a wild bird, an M a wild dog, and so forth. He added that wild animals were bad because they would bite people, and became afraid that the letters he had printed would bite him, begging the therapist to put away both printing set and the papers on which he had printed. . . . He went on to tell how he got bad marks at school, dramatizing how he had held his

<sup>3</sup> See case No. 2 in Phyllis Blanchard, "Psychoanalytic Contributions to the Problems of Reading Disabilities," in *The Psychoanalytic Study of the Child*, Vol. II, pp. 163-187. New York: International Universities Press, 1946.

book upside down and pretended not to know what was the right way to hold it; how he had made believe he did not know even the names of things in pictures.”<sup>4</sup> Another boy printed the letters F and E, and then the letters C, G, and U. He said that the first two letters were bad people holding guns, the last three were ready to bite—they had their mouths open. He was afraid that they would shoot him or bite him, and he had to get them out of sight quickly.<sup>5</sup>

#### *MOTHER DOMINANT, FATHER SUBMISSIVE*

Another pattern to be seen in families, perhaps outstanding because it seems to be the exception to the general rule, is the one in which the mother is the dominating figure in the family and the father occupies an insignificant and submissive role (or even is absent). The henpecked husband whose soul is not his own and who timidly does the bidding of his stern and commanding wife has been the subject of much caricature. In these cases the outstanding effects are on the sex characteristics of the children, which tend to be reversed from those which are normally found—boys take on feminine and passive ways, girls become aggressive and tomboyish. Homosexual men have been observed in many instances to have had mothers who were dominating and assertive and often prone to punish. The boy's early attempts to love his mother have to contend with her attempts to control and dominate him. As a child he has a choice of giving up his attachment to his mother or his masculinity. If he gives up his attachment to his mother, then he can retain his masculinity and develop the attributes of a boy. If, on the other hand, the mother becomes too demanding, too repressive, too aggressive toward her child, he may find it difficult to assert himself too much against his mother, and to choose the easier way, he identifies himself with her, falls in with her wishes, and takes on femi-

<sup>4</sup> Phyllis Blanchard, "Reading Disabilities in Relation to Difficulties of Personality and Emotional Adjustment" Case V. *Mental Hygiene*, 20 384-413, 1936.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, Case VI.

nine ways. He may be known as a sissy, may avoid competitive sports, and may prefer domestic activities to the more active and boisterous ones of the typical boy. He becomes a "mother's boy" and his normal masculine aggressiveness will show itself only on rare occasions when he has been exasperated by severe tormenting.<sup>6</sup> As he gives up his masculinity, he retains his mother to whom he finds it difficult to say "no" because she is such a demanding person. In the first case, when he resists his mother and adopts masculine traits, he prepares the way for heterosexual relationships; but if he gives up his masculinity and becomes passive, the way is paved for later homosexual trends and relationships.

The girl in a family where the mother is dominating and the father is passive and unresponsive may show the opposite trends. Very likely, as a child she will be a tomboy and will climb fences and trees, and play ball with boys. Although these activities may cease after adolescence, such a girl may develop a harshness and aggressiveness not characteristic of the average feminine character. Instead of using femininity in competing with her mother she too will yield to her and will attempt to compete in masculine ways to compensate for the disappointment which she feels because her father is unresponsive toward her. As is so often the case where love is not forthcoming, identification is adopted as a second best measure.

#### QUARRELING AND DISHARMONY BETWEEN PARENTS

Quarreling and disharmony between parents have a traumatic effect on a child in the family. Part of this effect is due to the fact that the child has identified himself with both parents and tends to take sides with each of them in turn. Naturally this provokes a conflict in the child himself, who is pulled in two directions. He can see justice on both sides

<sup>6</sup> M. W. MacDonald, "Criminally Aggressive Behavior in Passive Effeminate Boys." *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 8:70-78, 1938

of the argument. He can see the merit of his father's position. He can also sympathize and feel with his mother. Consequently, disharmony in a family has a most untoward influence on the child. Unfortunately, these competing tendencies are introjected and become part of the child and he is forced to carry within himself these warring factions which will come to life from time to time in periods of stress and frustration.

In addition to being torn by conflicts, the child is made to feel guilty. In fantasy he believes that the domestic unhappiness is due to his own bad thoughts and hostile impulses. Not being able quite to distinguish between reality without and his own feelings and impulses within, he tends to confuse them. He takes the blame for his parents' difficulties with each other and has need of making atonement for his feelings of guilt. He feels that he should be punished for his evil thoughts, and if the punishment is not forthcoming he tends to be particularly naughty in a way which his experience has taught him is calculated to bring him the needed punishment. This may be an explanation why children in unharmonious homes sometimes are bad, destroy property, or develop incorrigible and delinquent traits.

# 9

## SIBLING RIVALRY

**R**IVALRY between brothers and sisters is practically universal. Absence of such rivalry requires more explanation than its presence. Parents should not be disturbed or alarmed over minor bickerings and quarrels between brother and sister concerning possessions or place in the family. However, when these become exaggerated as, for instance, when a brother and sister quarrel continually in public, it might indicate anxiety on the part of one or the other over his complete acceptance by one or the other parent. Sibling rivalry is more pronounced when there is competition for the parent's love and affection; sibling rivalry will not become serious and lead to persistently undesirable symptoms if the parents really love all the children. It is when an older child has previously felt some doubt as to the place that he holds in his parents' affections that the sibling rivalry will have untoward consequences.

Attitudes which siblings hold toward each other are stimulated in part by parental attitudes. Hostilities which one sibling shows toward another are in most cases a displacement of more primary hostility toward a parent. This statement is a deduction from general dynamic principles and has not been proved specifically by clinical evidence. Clinical experience indicates, however, that different attitudes which parents take toward different children in a family help to increase or diminish sibling rivalry. Situations have been noted in which there is practically no rivalry between twins. If they have

been treated as of equal value from birth and one never being invariably preferred over the other (not being taken up for feeding or bathing first, or being dressed first) the tendencies toward rivalry are practically nonexistent. Usually, however, one finds considerable rivalry between twins and in these cases undoubtedly it has been stimulated by preferences expressed by parents. It has been said that sibling rivalry in general is less pronounced in brother-sister combinations than when the children are of the same sex.<sup>1</sup>

#### FORMS OF SIBLING RIVALRY

Sibling rivalry commonly takes the form of open hostility. During childhood, there is no compunction about fighting over possessions, calling names, attempting to gain supremacy for position in family affairs, and the like.

However, sibling rivalry sometimes takes disguised forms. Usually there is ambivalence. A little child seemingly looks forward with joy to the coming of a little brother or sister, talks about it continually, and makes parents feel that the newcomer will be entirely welcome. When the baby comes home from the hospital, the older child may hang around him, want to hold him, cover him with kisses, and ask to be permitted to take care of him. However, in spite of this interest and devotion strange things may happen. The older child may be careless with the new baby, may spill his milk, handle his carriage roughly, let his head jerk when holding him, and the like. Sometimes parents actually have to keep on guard lest the older child do real harm to the young baby.

Then, of course, there are the various types of reaction formation against hostility. One brother or sister may show exaggerated affection or loyalty or hero worship for another child. There are occasions in which one child will attempt to live out his own thwarted drives through the other child, as when one child who does not do well in school takes pride

<sup>1</sup> R. M. M. Bakwin and Harry Bakwin, "Psychologic Care of the Preschool Child, III." *Journal of Pediatrics*, 16:357-374, 1940.



in a brother or sister's performance, or when the ugly sister lives out her own thwarted wishes in the beauty of the other

Sometimes the child masters his hostility by assuming responsibility toward the younger child. What he may not harm, he can control. The older child may take the mother's place in feeding, dressing, and caring for the younger child. When the time comes for the baby to learn games and skills, the older child will assume the role of teacher. Later he will guide the child to and from school and will protect him from the taunts and threats of playmates

#### *TYPICAL PATTERNS OF RIVALRY*

With siblings close together in age, the typical pattern is one of intense rivalry. It so often happens that these children will grow up with sharply contrasted personalities. The explanation for this is that in the struggle for status they use different methods and adopt different policies. The older child, feeling threatened by a younger competitor whom he must strive to excel, may become serious, prudent, and conservative. The younger child with nothing to lose and everything to gain may become laughing, carefree, sociable, and unconventional. The older child may be thrifty, the younger child may gain satisfaction and prestige by spending freely for things which can be used for display. The older child in the family may make a good school record, the younger child whose school record may be less creditable may find recompense in being a favorite with schoolmates. If the older is a girl, parents may wish equal school success for the younger; if a boy, for school success for a boy means so much more to the parents. If the boy becomes a disappointment, parents should realize in this situation that the daughter in the family has usurped the honors so far as school is concerned and that the effort to make even as good a record is not worth the struggle for the boy. Close inspection may show that the boy is deriving his satisfactions from other activities and other forms of competence.

When children are spaced widely in years, hostility and ri-

valry may turn into identification. The older brother may be much admired and be a model to follow and the younger child may wish to go to the same camp, wear the same kind of clothes, major in the same subject in school, go to the same college, or travel through the same cities as his older brother.

Another common response to sibling rivalry is the assumption of a strong feeling of inferiority. This is particularly the case where one child is favored and the unfavored child is made to feel unworthy and ignoble. It is in such cases that fantasies of the Cinderella type arise and serve as compensations for the rebuffs of reality. The middle child in a family is in a particularly difficult position. Striving to equal those older than himself on the one hand, and to excel those younger on the other, he finds himself often neglected by parents and suffers from the rejection of neglect.

In larger families, there may be many circles and eddies of alliance and competition. Almost any triangular combination can form. Two sisters, for instance, can form an alliance against a brother. The alliance may be one of identification and sharing of common interests and the two may unite in their hostility toward the boy in the family. Or a brother and sister may find a close relationship which will exclude another sibling, who becomes left out of secrets, plans, and activities. Friendship and rivalry in families go to make up the most lustrous memories in later life. One may have deep feelings for a beloved brother or sister while resentments and jealousies are held against other brothers and sisters all through life.

# 10

## SPECIAL FAMILY SITUATIONS

**I**N THIS CHAPTER the influence on parent-child relationships of a number of special family situations, such as the broken home, the only child, and the adopted child, will be discussed.

### *THE BROKEN HOME*

A broken home is defined as a home in which one or both parents are absent through death, divorce, or desertion. From the psychological point of view, however, the physical wholeness of the family is not so important as the psychological relations within the family. It is possible to find a mother maintaining alone for her children a home which is far more constructive in its influences than another home in which both father and mother are present but where there is much disharmony. What counts with the children is the balance of acceptance or rejection on the part of one or both parents. The loss of a parent, however, quite apart from the relationship involved, has a traumatic effect. A child cannot but grieve at the fact that a parent is lost or absent. This is due in part to the child's unconscious feelings that he may have been responsible for the parent's death or separation, and to feelings of guilt which may arise from these beliefs.

One unfortunate consequence of the broken home is a tendency of the remaining parent to encourage excessive fixation of the children's affection. It is as though when one source of satisfaction for a parent's affectional life is taken away, the affection is concentrated on the children. This state of affairs is not unlike that discussed above, when a husband whose work absorbs all of his time and attention is absent in spirit,

if not in the flesh, and consequently does not satisfy. Sometimes when there has been a divorce a mother will overgratify her children with her love, as an expression of her emotional needs. Perhaps in addition, in this case, there may be the unconscious tendency to wish to hurt the children (by overprotection) as a way of hurting the father who is still fond of them and devoted to them. Naturally the remaining parent is all-important in reality in the child's life, and if the parent is at all strong-willed, the dominance and supervision will have a pronounced effect on the child's personality. The boy who is lacking the influence of a father in the home may fail to have a masculine figure with which to identify himself and will tend to take on more feminine tendencies. Hostilities between a girl and her mother may intensify if the father is missing. This cross-identification, which reverses the customary identification, will be found where a boy's father is missing or where a girl's mother is missing. On the other hand, a boy or girl may seek out some adult outside the family of the same sex as the missing parent with whom to identify himself or herself.

In those cases where a parent is missing, the child tends to feel ashamed, cheated, and crushed. He becomes sensitive to the taunts or teasings of other children with regard to the missing parent. If a playmate wishes to use this as a weapon, he finds the child against whom it is directed extremely sensitive. The child whose parent is divorced or dead will run violently to the defense of this parent and later on will feel extremely hurt and crushed by the taunts of other children.

There is a tendency toward overridealization of the absent parent. When a child's father dies he may become the ideal father, endowed with fine qualities which are exaggerated in imagination. It is not uncommon in such cases to find the component of hostility which was directed toward the parent while alive displaced onto some other individual. If it is the father who is dead, hostility may be displaced onto a brother or an uncle or some other male figure, leaving the fantasy

father isolated as a highly idealized figure. Similarly, the dead mother becomes the pure and good mother. Sometimes this results in the boy's wishing to become like the father whom he has built in fantasy, and in his striving to emulate him in work and endeavor. The girl may wish to become as good a mother as she remembers her mother to have been and she may become the zealous housewife and the anxious, driving mother. If the parent who dies or who leaves is a fond parent or a favorite parent, one who has been particularly good to the child, the situation may seem to the child like a loss of love, and the child may respond to it, as to rejection, by a surcharge of aggression and hostility or by any of the behavior and feelings which are produced by rejection. Refugee children who came to this country from England, leaving both parents on the other side, sometimes developed these characteristics. While they knew very well that they were sent away for their own safety because their parents loved them, they may have felt unconsciously that they were sent away because they were not wanted and that the separation was equivalent to loss of love (and in some circumstances there was an element of truth here, too). So there are cases in which, following the death of a parent, perhaps the mother, there will be an outbreak of delinquency on the part of the child. Thom cites an instance in which a little girl, after the death of her mother, tormented her father with an outbreak of destruction of furniture, fabrics, her own clothing, and the like. Although the full details of the history are not given, there seemed to be a direct connection between these destructive acts on the part of the child and the death of the mother.<sup>1</sup>

### THE ONLY CHILD

Several statistical studies of only children have been made which would indicate that by and large they are not so differ-

<sup>1</sup> D. A. Thom, *Habit Clinics for the Child of Preschool Age*. Case No. 13, p. 40. Children's Bureau, U. S. Department of Labor, Publication No. 135. Washington, D. C., 1924.

ent from children in larger families.<sup>2</sup> Clinical studies indicate, however, that the only child often suffers from certain disadvantages. First, there is a danger that the only child will form a fixation on the mother. This is due in part to the fact that the mother has no other child with whom her affection and attention can be divided and the one child becomes the sole recipient of it. It becomes difficult for both parent and child, in the latter's adolescence, to effect an emancipation from this close bond.

Second, the only child tends to be overprotected and overcoddled. This is partly because all the mother's care and attention are concentrated on the one child and partly because one child becomes very precious. As we have seen, such a child should and does respond by a lack of self-confidence and lack of independence. He frequently fails to attain the characteristics of maturity. The only child is also popularly known as being egotistical and selfish. He is not willing to share his possessions with others and must have things his own way. He becomes the king in the family and can brook no opposition. Being without siblings, he lacks the means of releasing through normal social give-and-take the aggressive impulses which parental restrictions arouse in him.

Not infrequently the youngest child in a family is overprotected and indulged and suffers from the same relationship difficulties as an only child. Since he is always treated as "the baby," the youngest child may have difficulty in maturing psychologically and in taking on adult responsibilities.

Because of the fixation ties with his parents, the only child may have difficulties with his love life in later years.<sup>3</sup> A boy may find that his tendencies toward fixation on his mother stand in the way of his easy displacement of love onto another woman. Not infrequently one finds that the mature man who

<sup>2</sup> A. L. Campbell, "The Personality Adjustments of Only Children" *Psychological Bulletin*, 31: 193-203, 1934.

<sup>3</sup> A. A. Brill, *Psychoanalysis*, Chap. XI. Philadelphia: W. B. Saunders Company, 1917.

has been an only child will have his mother close by in the background, where she keeps an eye on his affairs and where he can turn in case of need or when it is necessary for him to make an important decision. This does not necessarily mean that the only child will not become a success. A good illustration is the late Franklin D. Roosevelt, whose close relationship to his mother during his first two terms as president was well known.

### *THE ADOPTED CHILD*

The adopted child has been the subject of considerable discussion and study. Frequently a child is adopted by a man and wife after unsuccessful attempts to have a child of their own or to replace a child of their own who has died. Because of the long unfulfilled desire it would appear on the surface that the adopted child would be sincerely welcomed, and it is typical to find special preparations made for him.

It should be said that the fact that a child is not the real offspring of parents is no reason why the child cannot be genuinely loved. As a matter of fact, in many instances adopted children, especially when adopted young, are loved with the same warmth, tenderness, and pride as "own" children would be. Loving a child is a psychological, not a biological affair. If the conditions are right for a good parent-child relationship—if the parents are secure individuals, if they do not carry from childhood hostilities, anxieties, guilts, or ambitions which they may work off in their new family situation—then an adopted child can be loved as truly as an own child. It is easy, however, for the adopted child to be overprotected. In many respects the same factors which lead to overprotection, as cited on pages 70-76, operate in the case of the adopted child.

But, on the other hand, other factors may intrude which will lead to parental rejection. An adopted child emphasizes the barrenness of the mother or the impotence of the father and thereby may create feelings of guilt, abnormality, inferiority, and hostility. So, in many instances, overprotection or overin-

dulgence is a reaction formation against hostility Little Ralph, who was adopted by a childless couple when he was four months old, now at four years of age has a room crowded with expensive toys. Yet he petulantly turns from them all and tags after his mother as though he were afraid he would lose sight of her. She, on the other hand, claims that she is worn out by his persistent demands for attention and contends that he does not "appreciate" all that they have done for him. Frequently a child is adopted out of a sense of duty to have a "complete" family, or an unmarried woman may adopt a child as a compensation for her status in society, in which she is denied a child of her own. When a child is adopted for such narcissistic reasons, as though one could purchase and thus make up for the deficit enforced by nature or society, there must be a hollowness in the affectionate attitude toward the child. No matter how carefully a person selects an infant for adoption there must of necessity creep in the belief that the stock from which the child comes may be inferior, and the comparison may be made between the adopted child in actuality and one's own nonexistent children in fantasy to the disadvantage of the adopted child. This feeling that an adopted child is second best cannot help but exhibit itself in subtle ways which are rejecting. Every deficiency which an adopted child presents is easily ascribed to heredity.

The parents of the adopted child may show their hostility in several different ways. In case they decide not to reveal to the child that he is adopted, they are living a falsehood, and the retention of the secret must serve as an barrier. On the other hand, when they tell the child that he is adopted but do so with vehement affirmations of their love and devotion—"We picked you out from all the babies in the world as the one we love the best"—the very urgency of their declaration may serve as a denial. If parents are hostile toward an adopted child, telling the child of his adoption only reinforces the attitude which they have expressed in other ways. But if the parents really love their adopted child and he rests secure in



this love, telling him of his adoption will not alter his essential security.

When a child is adopted into a family where there is an own child, to whom he is to be a brother and playmate, the discrimination is almost inevitable. That such discrimination exists points also to the possibility that there is equal discrimination in favor of the fantasy own child where the adopted child is alone. The adopted child introduced into a family with own children occupies a position similar to that of a foster child in such a family, and the rejection of such "strange" children has become traditional in fairy tales and legends.

There is a common belief that after a child has been adopted into a childless home, there is a good chance that an own child will be born into the family. This view has been discussed in scientific literature and evidence points to a confirmation of it.<sup>4</sup> If adoption does release normal conception, the latter must occur as a result of psychological forces which are set into operation by the adoption, which forces in turn have a direct somatic influence. It may in part be the establishment of confidence in the mother, or the absolution of fear and guilt. This phenomenon points to the fact that, on the whole, adoption is a constructive force in the lives of the parents, creating stability, confidence, and reducing misunderstanding—and the results likewise must be salutary to the adopted child.

<sup>4</sup> Helene Deutsch, *Psychology of Women*, Vol. II, Chap. 11. New York Grune and Stratton, 1945.

K. A. Menninger, "Somatic Correlations with the Unconscious Repudiation of Femininity in Women" *Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease*, 89 514-527, 1939.

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# 11

## ESSENTIALS OF GOOD PARENT-CHILD RELATIONS

IT is difficult, if not impossible, to describe the kind of persons who make good parents. It would be convenient if what makes a good parent could be reduced to a set of ten commandments. Those who come to clinics for help demand something specific and definite; they want a set of rules to follow, rules that will absolve them of further responsibility for working through their own difficulties.

### *EXPRESSION BY PARENT*

#### SINCERITY AND COMMON SENSE

Perhaps the most valid general thing that can be said is that good parents are well-adjusted people. One cannot affirm that parents should never punish their children or should always be firm with their children or should always love their children, because never to punish or get angry or be put out with a son or daughter would require saintliness which is not to be found on this earth. Good parents deal with their children on a basis of reality, reason, and common sense. So far as possible their attitudes toward their children are not governed solely by unconscious tendencies. Whatever attitude good parents take toward their children, they take them openly and in the light of what seems to be called for by circumstances and for the children's good.

Good parents are honest, direct, straightforward, and frank with their children. It is amazing to discover the extent to

which some parents feel that they must deal with their children by underhand and secretive methods. A mother will sometimes spell out what she wishes to say to her husband if she feels it would be unwise for the younger child to hear. Not infrequently mothers bring their children to clinics for consultation without telling the children where they are going or the nature and purpose of the visit. Even the mother of a fifteen-year-old boy wondered what she should tell her son when it was suggested that he needed psychological help. Some mothers feel that they must not admit their own weakness nor take their children into their confidence nor work out problems jointly. They fear that by doing so they would destroy their own authority and place themselves at a disadvantage with the children. The secure parent admits his mistakes to his children and thus helps the child to develop his own powers of criticism and to think for himself.

#### IDENTIFICATION WITH THE CHILD

Good parents have the ability to identify themselves with their children—to know their thoughts and especially to sense their feelings. Some parents can accept their children's "good" thoughts and feelings, but other thoughts and feelings they reject as though they were foreign bodies that should be cast out. It is possible to accept the reality of a child's thought and feelings, to be sensitive to the situations which brought them forth, and at the same time to take steps to see that the child has less need to think and feel aggressively or obscenely. One can be tolerant and accepting of a child and yet plan for a child's growth in more mature directions.

In this connection good parents are frank and honest in answering the questions which children put to them. Probably every child at approximately the age of four or five attempts to orient himself with regard to persons and events. He wants to know where he came from and where he is going to and he may ask "embarrassing" questions. The wise parent answers these as honestly as possible on a level of the child's

comprehension.<sup>1</sup> If questioning about intimate matters is hushed and not answered, there is a chance that the child's natural curiosity will become dulled and that this inhibition of curiosity may spread to other forms of learning to the detriment of a child's school progress. In addition, the sensible parent answers the child's questions in words that the child can understand so that there does not develop the situation of the child who, when told that "all persons die in the end," asked after a few moment's reflection whether grandfather was in the end when he died.

#### EMOTIONAL RESPONSE TOWARD THE CHILD

Good parents are sincere in their emotional responses toward their children. If they lose patience with their child, they let the child experience their feelings immediately and if necessary with full force. This is certainly to be preferred to submerging their feelings, which are then doled out in dribbles over a period of days or weeks in nagging and resentment. Naturally one would expect a parent to be so adjusted that hate would not necessarily have to express itself in distrust, hostility, severe punishment, or exaggerated restrictions; but if a parent's cause for strong feeling is justified and if he feels secure, he does not attempt to hide his anger but gives expression to it in such a way that following the release of his emotion, normal relationships and feelings can quickly be re-established. But it is better still to be aware of anger and to redirect it constructively.

Good parents deal with the child, the whole child, as an individual, and not with special aspects of the child. Child training only too often becomes a gadget which may or may not "work" in helping a parent to enforce his will on the child. Parents who look on the problem of training as one of manipulation are sure to fail. It is true that the child is only

<sup>1</sup> Nina Searl, "Questions and Answers," in J. Rickman, editor, *On the Bringing Up of Children* London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and Company, 1936.

an immature person, still, the wise parent deals with him, within the limits of his capacity, as an individual whose feelings, wishes, and needs are to be respected and to be satisfied so far as occasions and circumstances permit.

#### LOVE AND AFFECTION

Maternal love has often been referred to as an instinct, and undoubtedly it does have an instinctual basis. But it is probably more appropriate to think of it as the distribution of feeling of the normal well-adjusted mother. To her child she is affectionate and tender, directing toward the child her positive feelings, while her aggressiveness becomes redirected toward the outer environment in defense of her child and in the interests of his protection, if need be. Motherliness implies giving, and in particular the giving of food.

It is clear that parents need to be reassured that it is reputable to show love for their children. That this should ever have been doubted seems now to be one of the strange twists of psychological doctrine; but in the 1920's one psychologist actually taught that it was silly for parents to show their children too much affection. The following passage is from Watson:<sup>2</sup>

There is a sensible way of treating children. Treat them as though they were young adults. Dress them, bathe them with care and circumspection. Let your behavior always be objective and kindly firm. Never hug and kiss them, never let them sit in your lap. If you must, kiss them once on the forehead when they say good night. Shake hands with them in the morning. Give them a pat on the head if they have made an extraordinarily good job of a difficult task. Try it out. In a week's time you will find how easy it is to be perfectly objective with your child and at the same time kindly. You will be utterly ashamed of the mawkish, sentimental way you have been handling it.

From our present understanding of the importance of emo-

<sup>2</sup> Reprinted from *Psychological Care of Infant and Child* by John B. Watson, by permission of W. W. Norton & Company, Inc. Copyright 1928 by the publishers.

tional security to the young child, it would seem that the *most* important duty of the mother is to show her child every token of love and affection. Evidence that is accumulating points to the fact that personality development in children depends on the warmth of love and intimate contacts afforded by parents. Ribble, who made clinical observations of 600 infants, says, "The role of the mother in maintaining an orderly rhythm in sucking, in eliminating, in general bodily movement and comfort, and in the basic feelings of orientation and security, all of which comes from adequate handling and fondling, is fundamental for emotional and social development as well as for physiological control."<sup>3</sup> R. A. Spitz, as a result of his observations of infants in a foundling home, where they were separated from their mothers, as contrasted with infants in a nursery, where they remained with their mothers, concludes that "The damage inflicted on infants by their being deprived of maternal care, maternal stimulation, and maternal love, as well as their being completely isolated, is irreparable."<sup>4</sup> Margaret Fries, a New York pediatrician and psychoanalyst, comes to the same conclusion as a result of her many studies of infant development. Malcove, in reviewing Dr. Fries' work, summarizes by saying, "It was found that of greatest importance to the child's development was his relationship to his mother—a fact now axiomatic."<sup>5</sup>

Plant<sup>6</sup> has made a significant point that a child should be

<sup>3</sup> M. A. Ribble, "Infantile Experience in Relation to Personality Development," in J. McV. Hunt, editor, *Personality and the Behavior Disorders*, Vol. II, Chap. 20, pp. 621-651. New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1944. See also M. A. Ribble, *The Rights of Infants*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1943.

<sup>4</sup> R. A. Spitz, "Hospitalism," in *The Psychoanalytic Study of the Child*, Vol. I, pp. 113-117. New York: International Universities Press, 1946.

<sup>5</sup> Lillian Malcove, "Margaret E. Fries' Research in Problems of Infancy and Childhood," in *The Psychoanalytic Study of the Child*, Vol. I, pp. 405-414. New York: International Universities Press, 1945. See also M. E. Fries, "Interrelationships of Physical, Mental and Emotional Life of a Child from Birth to Four Years of Age," *American Journal of Diseases of Children*, 49, 1546-1563, June 1935.

<sup>6</sup> J. S. Plant, *Personality and the Cultural Pattern*. New York: Commonwealth Fund, 1937.

accepted in the family for what he is (that is, as a member of the family), and not for what he can do. That is, a child has no role to fill in order to be the recipient of his parents' love other than that of a helpless child and a child whom they have brought into the world and for whom they have assumed responsibility. A child should not have to show obedience, produce a good report from school, pick up his clothes, or go to bed on time in order to be loved by his parents. Sometimes parents make the giving of their love a bargain. "If you will pass every subject in school, then I will get you the baseball mitt which you have been wanting." Love is not something to be bargained for. Parents can afford to give their love freely and without stint and to demand nothing in return.

However, it is possible, as we have seen, to surfeit a child with love and thereby prevent him from facing a normal amount of frustration and hence from growing up. Every child needs a certain amount of frustration in order to mature properly. The child who is given too much protection is denied the opportunity of maturing.

In like manner, good parents do not sacrifice too much for their children. Every parent has a right to live his own life and to experience satisfactions and comforts on his own account rather than to concentrate them *all* on the growing child. As one writer has put it, the true sacrifice of a parent is what he is willing *not* to do for his child. In short, in the good home there is a steady balance between giving love and affection to the child and not surrounding the child with too much protection.

#### INTEREST IN PLEASURES AND ACTIVITIES OF THE CHILD

Good parents honestly share pleasures and activities with their children, and for them family life contains as many shared experiences as possible. Perhaps it is not necessary to add that these parents enjoy their children and get pleasure

from them. It is discouraging to discover how many parents find their children nuisances, burdens, interferences, and trouble makers. Good parents find their children fun and enjoy playing with them and watching them grow up. A good mother will enjoy nursing her child until the child has developed so that he can take food from a spoon and drink from a cup. And in later years the good father and mother will follow with keen appreciation and interest their child's progress in school, his success in games and sports, his hobbies and accomplishments.

Good parents do not love the child exclusively for their own pleasure, but for the child's growth. Naturally parents should get pleasure, as we have said, from their children, but they should not find in their children the exclusive source of their pleasure. Normally a wife should find pleasure in her husband and perhaps he should be the major source of her satisfactions. It is unfair to children, and is even detrimental to their proper maturing, when the mother who is otherwise starved for outlets for her emotional life concentrates all her affection on her children.

#### INTEREST IN DEVELOPMENT OF THE CHILD

Good parents want a child to grow and develop. The growing independence of a child should be a special source of satisfaction, not a threat to parents, for under their care another personality is emerging. So good parents encourage a child to show individuality and to have rights of his own, and they take pride in evidences and signs of his maturing independence. The child's growth adds to the stature of the parents. Growth is a safer yardstick than perfection in evaluating a child.

Well-adjusted parents do not permit themselves to become excited by their children to the extent that the caresses of the child become highly stimulating. Rather the parent's satisfactions in the child are derived from tending him, watching him grow, and finding pleasure in every new achievement



which the child can display. Well-adjusted parents do not overstimulate a child sexually. They do not overfondle the child until the child himself becomes excited. The secure and happy child has not been unduly tickled or stroked or patted, although all of these things of course are harmless in themselves when done in moderation and in a spirit of fun. On the other hand, well-adjusted parents do not inhibit their child's sexual expression. If there is an excess of autoerotism, which is a sign that the child is being frustrated in other directions, the parents should secure help in their handling of the child in order to see that the matter is corrected. But if the child finds pleasure in his own body to a moderate degree and in a spirit of play, there is no need for putting a stop to it. In general, the child who finds healthy outlets for his activities in play with other children is not going to turn to himself for his pleasures.

A child's first emotional relationship is with the mother, at least in our society. Normally the father is not a very important person until the last part of the first year or during the second year. But every child flourishes best when he receives the love of two parents—a mother who is cherishing, supporting, and gentle, a father who represents the more vigorous, forceful, and powerful side of life. A child whose parents lack these contrasting qualities fails to develop an all-round personality.

#### FIRMNESS AND QUIET CONTROL

It should not be assumed in this long discussion of the necessity of the parent's showing love toward a child that this necessarily means that the parent should be lax and submissive. The good parent assumes responsibility for his child's development. David Levy,<sup>7</sup> who has made careful observations of maternal behavior in animals, points out that characteristic of all mammal mothers is a certain amount of

<sup>7</sup> D. M. Levy, *Maternal Overprotection* New York. Columbia University Press, 1943

aggressiveness. It is well known that it is dangerous to be in woods where there may be bears at a time when the mother bear has a family of cubs, for at that time she will be particularly ferocious. Like the mother bear, the good human mother not only will run to the protection of her child and will fight intruders who want to molest him, but will also be firm with the child in directing his development.

A self-respecting parent does not let his children hurt him but is able to protect himself. A mother will not let her child hurt her by his being unnecessarily vigorous at her breasts during nursing, nor let him show too much aggression in other ways later. A parent will not permit his feelings to be hurt by words, thoughts, or attitudes which a child expresses, for such a wound indicates vulnerability in the parent's self-esteem. A child will respect the adult who is able to take care of himself.

In being firm, however, good parents are not unduly stern, repressive, or severe. This is a difficult point to get over to parents who feel somewhat insecure in their dealings with a child. They do not know how to handle the child without a good deal of threatening or the use of punishment. Punishment may have its place in emergencies, and a parent should not be afraid to punish. But, in general, punishment treats the symptom and not the cause, and whatever impulse or conflict causes a child to misbehave is still within him after punishment. Punishment, in addition to inhibiting the undesirable activity, creates hostility, fear, and anxiety, and these may be more serious and harmful than the misbehavior which the parent wishes to eliminate. Secure parents cultivate an attitude of tolerance and calm, even amusement, at the behavior which they cannot approve, as when a child is overly aggressive or dirty or when he engages in some form of sex play. The secure parent, from the very beginning, manages a child by a sort of cheerful vigor and bustle. The child is not left in doubt as to what is expected of him and knows that the parent is going to carry out his intentions objectively but

decisively. Rather than using "don't" too often, the wise parent will provide positive channels for the utilization of the energy of the child.

#### CONSISTENCY IN DISCIPLINE

When the two parents have different standards for their children and wish to enforce them by different methods, it is a sign of tension in the ascendance-submissive relationships between them. These tensions are inevitable, but wise parents find a way of adjusting their differences and of deciding how the forces shall be balanced, because each admires and respects the other as well as himself. And they exercise consistent discipline because they themselves are emotionally stable individuals.

The morale of the family is extremely important in child upbringing. Family atmosphere, the courage with which parents face the problems of life, their freedom from distressing fears and crippling anxieties, their freedom from doubt, their decisiveness—all these are important for the growth of healthy minds. It is probably impossible for parents not to worry at times over the outcome of projects and over the strained relations with other persons, but the good parent is one who manages his worries by maintaining a balanced view of possibilities. The secure parent does not have a burden of guilt over previous wrongdoings or even over evil thoughts. In identifying themselves with their parents, children tend to take up and carry over distresses and strains which their parents may exhibit, whereas if the parents are stable, strong, and courageous, the children will also face life and its problems in a similar fashion. Wise parents sacrifice everything else in favor of good mental health, as this is the foundation of satisfactory living. Keeping up with the Joneses, struggling to maintain standards of living which place too great a strain on the family income and which lead to worry and fret, are foolish substitutes for a more secure mode of living on a lower economic level.

## ORDER AND ROUTINE

Children thrive best in an orderly environment. Since the parents represent the most important part of the child's environment, it is desirable that parents be dependable and live orderly lives that center around the home. Good parents give their children a feeling that they are utterly dependable and can always be counted on. A child should feel that his parents will always be there, standing by, when he needs them—like a Rock of Gibraltar. Good parents should seem so strong and secure to a child that not the least shadow of doubt should cross his mind that he might distrust them or that they might fail him. Good parents also are consistent, showing essentially the same attitudes and demands day in and day out. A large part of the child's security will depend on the harmony and teamwork between the parents themselves. Some successful families adopt customs, rituals, and traditions, not only for day-to-day living but also for the cycle of the week and month and for special holidays and festivals throughout the year.

On the other hand, this emphasis on routine and orderly living does not make good parents slaves to laws and rules. It is just as necessary to avoid becoming rigid and inflexible and insisting that things be done in a set way, as to avoid having life chaotic and disorderly. A child brought up in a family that is too ritualistic and perfectionistic might have difficulty later on in adjusting to the requirements of marriage or of employment, or of life as a citizen. On this Deutsch has said:

Many young mothers defy the discipline of modern infant care just as they have defied every other discipline. The matriarchal-active mother and the feminine-intuitive woman know how to find their way around all the rules. The former persuades the pediatrician, the latter charms him or cheats him a little. The baby fares well with either—with the former because she loves him and does not yet make any ideal demands upon him, with

the latter because she lovingly understands or, more accurately, senses him.<sup>8</sup>

#### FAIR DEMANDS ON CHILD

Wise parents do not place on a child demands too difficult for him to meet. Here is another area in which good parents strive to seek a proper balance between two extremes. On the one hand, children need a certain amount of stimulation in the way of frustration. They need to be given an opportunity to do things for themselves in order to gain resourcefulness and independence, rather than to find everything done without any necessity for effort on their part. Wise mothers let little children learn how to tie their shoestrings, put the tops on saltcellars, open the milk bottle, and perform other simple tasks in connection with their daily lives. Wise fathers let their young sons have the opportunity of building the cantilever bridge from the construction set themselves rather than taking the initiative away from them. Only as a child is given opportunity to explore and experiment will he gain the experiences which enable him to develop.

On the other hand, good parents do not put demands on a child which are too difficult for his level of maturity. Sometimes parents want their children to grow up faster than nature intended. The child is set tasks and encouraged to achievements which are unnatural in one so young. To thrust a child from the protection of the family to fend for himself at too early an age is a grave threat to the child's sense of adequacy and security. It is important that a child be adequately prepared for each new and difficult experience. A wise parent will talk over with a child ahead of time almost every new experience, attempting to whet the child's curiosity and pointing out pleasurable experiences to be expected. In this way a little child can be prepared for the coming of a brother or sister. When it is time for the child to enter

<sup>8</sup> Helene Deutsch, *Psychology of Women*, Vol II, p 275. New York: Grune and Stratton, 1945.

school, the wise mother will help him to look forward to the experience with pleasurable anticipation.

#### PROVISION OF SOCIAL CONTACTS OUTSIDE THE HOME

Children are not always going to stay in the parental home and their development is helped if, at an early age, they can learn to enjoy playing with children outside the home. Wise parents encourage their friendship with neighboring playmates. A good home is one to which children enjoy coming to play, and in like manner a child should feel free to go about and visit other children in their homes. This is the beginning of the widening social contacts which should continue throughout life.

#### THE CONCEPT OF THE CHILD AS GOOD

The attitude that a child takes concerning himself is, first of all, the one that is represented to him by his parents. Every person knows himself only as he is reflected in the attitude of others. The child who is thought to be a good child or a courageous child and is told this many times a day by father and mother believes himself to be a good child or a courageous child and will act according to his lights. On the other hand, the child who is called bad or naughty by his elders will believe that he is bad, will hold *himself* in disgrace, and will act the part that he believes he is expected to play. Good parents help children to respect themselves and to avoid feelings of inferiority as they grow up by accepting them as they are when little and by not making invidious comparisons with other children or other members of the family. Parents can help their children to grow in the direction of their own ideals by thinking of the child and addressing him in terms of those ideals. But it is easy to cause strain and anxiety by setting the goals too high and by making their attainment seem too important—a condition for the continuance of the parent's love, for example.

Finally, secure parents do not hesitate to seek outside help

when they feel that problems have arisen to which they are having difficulty in finding a wise solution. Help should not be sought in a spirit of helplessness and dependence, but with the thought that one can work through one's own difficulties successfully only with some outside assistance and counsel. To seek help need not be a disgrace or a sign of weakness, but a sign of strength and wisdom.

### ESSENTIALS OF GOOD HUSBAND-WIFE RELATIONSHIPS

The following suggestions concerning the essentials of good husband-wife relationships have been drawn in the main from ideas proposed by Melanie Klein.<sup>9</sup> The husband and wife should feel that they are grown up and the equals of their own fathers and mothers. The man or woman who is not mature will find it difficult to establish satisfactory marriage relationships. When a child, one tends to look on father and mother almost as supernatural beings with great power and goodness. To be like father and mother is the unexpressed aim of every normal child. A little boy wishes to be as strong and protective as his father. A little girl would like to be as maternal and helpful as her mother. When a child, one depends on one's parents for these qualities, admiring, perhaps envying, their possession of them. During the process of maturing, one becomes emancipated from the necessity of one's parents' protection and help, and by identifying oneself with one's parents, gradually learns to assume their role. The man who can feel himself the equal of his father or the woman the equal of her mother will have the capacities for being a good husband or wife.

#### MUTUAL TRUST AND ADMIRATION

The husband and wife should trust and admire the other as each did his own parents. In a sense, in marriage one is

<sup>9</sup> Melanie Klein and Joan Riviere, *Love, Hate and Reparation* Psycho-analytical Epitomes, No. 2. London: The Hogarth Press, 1937.

securing in his mate a person who will take the place of father or mother. Just as father and mother were admired and worshiped, so the good husband will admire and worship his wife as someone beautiful, helpful, and dependable, and the good wife admire and worship her husband as someone strong, protective, and altogether worthy.

Each should find pleasure in giving the other satisfaction. Children have wishes which naturally can never be wholly gratified. The little boy, for instance, would like to have his mother all for himself, although at times he may feel hostility and resentment toward her because of the restrictions and demands she places on him. Later, however, he becomes ashamed of these hostile feelings and wishes to do reparation for them by helping his mother, doing what she wants him to do, and giving her gifts. These wishes, never wholly fulfilled in childhood, can be consummated in marriage where the desire to love and to make reparation for unworthy fantasies can be worked out in reality.

#### IDENTIFICATION WITH EACH OTHER

It has been found that in boys there are real but vague fantasies of playing the feminine role and, like the mother, being able to bear children. So the man in marriage is able, through identification and in fantasy, to share with his wife these experiences which give him release and freedom to play his masculine role without interference. Similarly, the woman can share with her husband, through identification and in fantasy, some of her masculine strivings which will permit her to become altogether feminine and motherly in her actual conduct.

#### RESPONSES OF THE CHILD TO SECURITY

It is interesting that in the psychological and clinical literature on parent-child relationships there is a paucity of description of the outcomes of security on children. About the only study which provides definitive data in this is the author's own



on accepted and rejected children.<sup>10</sup> A secure child, that is, one who is accepted by father and mother, is first of all a socialized child. He grows up to be like his father and mother, to defer to their wishes and demands, and to fit into the community, with all of its standards, in which he was reared. A secure child tends to be cooperative and loyal. He finds it easy to renounce primitive and immediate pleasures for the sake of compensatory distant gratifications. In this sense he is known as a *good* child, one whom it is easy to praise and about whom it is easy to find nice things to say. The secure child wants to grow up and become mature.

The secure child develops desirable character qualities. He tends to be honest, straightforward, and dependable, without guilt or deceit. The secure child is careful of property. He soon learns not to be destructive but to appreciate the rights of others. Those who are interested in character education should note that the best guarantee of good character is emotional security in childhood.

The secure child is friendly. He is outgoing toward others and finds it easy to establish friendly relationships both with children and with adults.

The secure child is enthusiastic and interested. Anna Freud and Dorothy Burlingham mention in their study<sup>11</sup> that children growing up in families show greater liveliness and more social responsiveness than children growing up in institutions. The secure child has good morale. Whatever experiences he has, whatever hobbies he takes up, whatever activities he engages in, he will tend to carry them on with enthusiasm, without grumbling, and to put his whole heart and soul into them. The secure child is one who can concentrate on the task before him without having the need to spend time in daydreaming or fantasy. He is free to develop his investigative, constructive, or artistic capacities.

<sup>10</sup> P. M. Symonds, *The Psychology of Parent-Child Relationships*. New York: D. Appleton-Century Company, 1939.

<sup>11</sup> Anna Freud and D. T. Burlingham, *War and Children*. New York: International Universities Press, 1943.

The secure child *feels* in ways which are consonant with his behavior. In the first place, the secure child *feels* secure and self-confident. The secure child is stable emotionally. He meets frustrations without severe emotional disturbance. When things go wrong, the secure child does not become greatly upset. In school he is known as the calm, deliberate, attentive child. He does not easily become confused. He is sure of himself and he approaches tasks courageously. He is not upset by anxieties or fears and is not given to worry. The secure child is cheerful and optimistic and is relaxed, not tense.

The secure child evaluates himself realistically. He does not have the need to project his difficulties and limitations onto other people but can accept his limitations and shortcomings in the same objective fashion as he accepts his strengths and skills. The secure child does not indulge in self-pity, but is contented and happy.

The thesis of this book is that an individual's personality is in large measure an outgrowth of the parent-child relationships in infancy. If one wishes to select a good student for school or college, a good worker in a business, a good husband or wife, a good leader for an enterprise, he can do no better than to inquire into the nature of the individual's family and his relations with his parents as a child. If an individual possesses a healthy, stable, courageous, and loving father and mother, then the chances are in his favor that he will be found to be a good student, a good worker, a good husband or wife, a good leader, and a good citizen.

#### *PERSONALITY AND UNCONSCIOUS FACTORS IN GOOD PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIPS*

In each of the foregoing chapters factors which are responsible for various parental attitudes have been described. In this section some of the factors which determine favorable parent-child relationships will be outlined. Many of these factors will be merely the absence of unfortunate personality

trends and of present unfortunate circumstances. But good parent-child relationships depend not only on the absence of the bad but also on the presence of favorable attitudes, and these will be described. A caution should be given here lest some readers feel a hopelessness and despair because they find that they do not come up to all of the conditions to be described. Some individuals feel a need to be perfect and can tolerate no thought that in some way their lives fall short of perfection. Perfection, unfortunately, is the lot of no one. Every person has had vicissitudes in life leading to personalities which fall short of the ideal. Every gardener knows that the summer season can be expected to be at times too hot or too cool, too dry or too moist, but that in spite of it all crops do yield. So, in human affairs, a variety of experiences must come to everyone. No one is a wholly "good" person. But anyone can become a better person by accepting himself with all his failure to achieve perfection instead of pretending that his less admirable characteristics do not exist.

#### IMMEDIATE FACTORS

First of all, full acceptance of a child requires a marriage that is sound and stable. The good husband and wife are mature persons, they love and respect each other, and they live in harmony with the common goal and interest of establishing and raising a family. Satisfying sex relations is an important factor in this relationship.<sup>12</sup> A home threatened by divorce is not a place where a child can grow up with emotional security. It is important that the parents be secure individuals, personally and emotionally, and that they live in conditions which contribute to their security. Economic security contributes in an important way to the security of the home, to the security of the parents with each other, and to the security of each child in the home. And the economic and political

<sup>12</sup> D. M. Baruch and J. A. Wilcox, "A Study of Sex Differences in Preschool Children's Adjustment Coexistent with Interparental Tensions." *Journal of Genetic Psychology*, 64: 281-303, 1944.

stability of society contributes to the security of every family in that society.

Any unfortunate incident relating to the process of bringing a child into the world and rearing it becomes a threat to parent-child relationships. Such an incident might be a previous abortion, miscarriage, or stillbirth, emotional disturbance of the mother during pregnancy, difficult or prolonged birth of the infant. Superstitious beliefs that a mother's severe fright during pregnancy results in some abnormality of the child have no foundation, but emotional disturbances can interfere with a mother's attitude toward a child after birth. Any threat to a child after birth—a prolonged illness, a serious injury, a threat of accident—may arouse anxiety in either or both parents and lead to unfortunate overprotection.

The child who has the best chance to be accepted by his parents is the child who is easy to accept. It is extremely difficult for parents wholly to accept a child who is deformed, or crippled, or who has a disfiguring birthmark. It is also difficult wholly to accept a child who is mentally deficient, or is retarded in development, or who has difficulty in progressing in school. Parents want a child whom they can admire, cherish, and love, and it is easy to accept a child who is lovable and admirable.

#### PERSONALITY AND UNCONSCIOUS FACTORS

The roots of parental acceptance of a child lie in the parents' own personalities. And it is the personalities of the parents that determine whether the immediate conditions of living are to be reacted to traumatically, with anxiety and hostility, or with stability and good adjustment.

Probably the first and most important factor making for a good parent is that the individual should have had a secure childhood and have grown up to be an emotionally secure person. With a stable and loving father and mother a boy or girl grows up to take on stable characteristics, and when the time comes he or she will take on the responsibilities of parent-

hood. The secure person loves freely and without guilt; he is free from vicious hatreds, he is not chained by crippling anxieties, guilts, or ambitions. So one can look to good parents and a happy childhood as the prime ingredient in the making of a good parent in the next generation.

Good parents identify themselves with their own parents. They want to establish a home which will be as good a home as that which their parents provided for them. They have their own parents as ideals. As children, then, they were neither rejected nor overprotected; they did not have to assume undue responsibility nor was responsibility denied them, they were respected in the family group but not given undue prominence.

Good parents have strong superegos, to be sure, but their superegos are not overly strong and impelling. On the one hand, they have standards which make them want to direct the growth of their children so that they may become acceptable members of society, yet their standards are not too severe nor are their ambitions too intense. On the other hand, they are not unduly repressive or restricting, but permit their growing children to be spontaneous and expressive.

It is important that parents have worked out their Oedipus conflict, leaving no unresolved trace of rivalry and competition on the one hand, or of unsatisfied love needs on the other. If their earlier Oedipus needs have been well assimilated into effective parental identification, effective repression and control, and satisfying sublimations, then one may expect that relations between parent and child will be normal and constructive. Parents then can love their children without having the need to reject them through unresolved hostilities on the one hand, or overindulge them through unresolved love needs on the other. There is perhaps no more important factor in determining good parent-child relations than a satisfactory resolution of earlier Oedipus strivings.

At the same time it is important that sibling relationships of the parents in their own childhood should have been good—

which means that sibling rivalries should not have been too intense. This, of course, goes back to the attitude of the parents of the parents, who could intensify or mollify sibling rivalries by their favoritism or fairness, rejection or acceptance. If sibling relationships were good when the parents were children, then they can also establish normal and wholesome relations with their own children.

Being secure individuals ensures that the parents are neither overly anxious nor burdened with excessive guilt. Freedom from both of these is essential to performing well the duties of parenthood. The anxious parent will tend to overprotect; the guilty parent may project hostility onto a child. Anxiety and guilt may be residues of childhood or even infantile attitudes which have never been wholly resolved and, becoming re-stimulated in the new family situation, work themselves out on children in the family. Freedom from anxiety or guilt means that parents can be more objective and realistic in dealing with their children.

It is also important that a parent be not too self-centered or narcissistic. If narcissism is too strong, then the child becomes a toy, a bauble to be dressed and shown off to please the mother. But if the mother is freed from these narcissistic needs, she can then permit the child to grow as best suits his expanding personality.

Similarly, a good parent does not have ambitions too high to be fulfilled. It is natural, of course, for a parent to project his ambitions onto a child, and to find in his children new hope in achieving more and better things than he was able to achieve. This is natural and good. But when these ambitions become grasping and driving, when the parent nags and forces a child to satisfy the parent's unfulfilled longings, then the result is less satisfactory. To have ambitions for one's child is not bad, but to couple these ambitions with greediness and hostility is damaging to the child's growing personality. A parent should be ambitious for the child principally, and not for himself.

Finally, a good parent accepts his own sex role. A good father accepts his masculinity and a good mother accepts her femininity. Deutsch says, "In my opinion the highest stage of maternal love, motherliness, is achieved only where all masculine wishes have been given up or sublimated into other goals."<sup>13</sup> Thus accepting their own roles, parents find it possible to accept the sex of their children—a boy if a boy and a girl if a girl. In general, parents must first be able to accept themselves before they are able to accept their children.

These are some of the factors which help make parents good parents. Back of it all, to repeat, is the fact that this man and this woman have each come from happy homes so that they have grown up to be stable and secure. Then they can admire and love each other; and they can admire and love their children.

<sup>13</sup> Helene Deutsch, *op. cit.*, pp. 306, 307.

# 12

## PARENT EDUCATION AND PSYCHOTHERAPY

**T**HE GREATER PART of this book has dealt with various aberrations in relationships between parent and child. Many readers may feel overwhelmed by guilt or plunged into depression because they recognize some of their own shortcomings and feel that because these parent-child relationships are deeply embedded in the dynamics of the parents' personality they are irremediable. This chapter has been added to show a more hopeful side of the picture, namely, how parental attitudes can be wisely directed and, if necessary, modified.

It is only in the last decade that the emphasis in child guidance has shifted from treatment of the child to treatment of the parents. In the first days of the child guidance movement, when a child was referred for problem behavior there was an attempt to modify that behavior by changing the child's environment or by changing his attitudes. The parents were called upon to assist in this process. With the growth of understanding of the forces which help to mold a child's personality, and in particular of the central part that the parents have in this process, has come a new emphasis on changing the attitudes of parents in order to create a more favorable environment for the development of personality in the child. With the assimilation of the point of view that the relations between parents and child are the most important factor in the development of the child's personality, the emphasis in child guidance work has gradually shifted to include an at-



tempt to modify parental attitudes. This movement has been accelerated because of lack of success in child guidance efforts when attention was given to the child alone.

At the present time the best practice in child guidance leans toward the simultaneous treatment of mother and child. As the child is brought to the clinic for a therapeutic play session, the mother will participate in a therapeutic interview with one of the clinic workers. It is believed that the best results would be achieved by treating all members of the family simultaneously. But because fathers normally have less time to give, the optimum that can be achieved in ordinary practice is to give therapeutic help to the mother and child.

Recent studies indicate that there is a relationship between changes in the parents and changes in the child. In earlier days, with the emphasis on helping the child, it was found that when a child made improvement the parents also became less anxious and tense. On the other hand, as a parent becomes better adjusted, less anxious, and more stable emotionally, the child in response will show improvement. Undesirable symptoms will disappear, and tenseness and anxiety will be relieved.

#### *EDUCATION VERSUS PSYCHOTHERAPY*

The distinction between parent education and parent psychotherapy should be kept in mind. Education aims primarily at helping parents to develop wise methods of child rearing. Education strives to influence constructively the process of child upbringing and to prevent bad practices from developing. Education has a prophylactic and preventive aim. However, not only because parent education is limited in its endeavors but also because parent attitudes are the product of early experiences in the parent's own childhood, as well as the result of more direct educational experiences, parent-child relationships take the unfortunate directions that have been recounted in earlier chapters in this book. Consequently, in addition to parent education there is a need for correction of bad

parent attitudes and for the treatment of some parents as maladjusted persons, that is, for the psychotherapy of parents. Actually, the procedures used by education and psychotherapy are to a large extent identical. They differ, perhaps, only in their emphasis. Education depends on imparting information, but there are times in a corrective process when information is called for. Education depends more than anything else on the arranging of learning situations and exercises. There are times, however, in the later stages of a psychotherapeutic process when there is also need for direction and guidance. Both education and psychotherapy use the changing of the environment in a more or less thoroughgoing fashion to serve their respective purposes. Counseling, in its original meaning of giving advice or offering suggestions, is used both educationally and psychotherapeutically.<sup>1</sup>

Of central importance in psychotherapy are the recognition and acceptance of feeling on the part of the therapist, with the corresponding release of feeling by the therapee. However, in recent discussions this more generous expression of feeling is recognized as an important phase of education. Of the more strictly psychotherapeutic procedures there is reassurance, but even this has rather limited therapeutic value and its purpose is the temporary allayment of anxiety rather than a more thoroughgoing change of attitude and release of tension. Finally in psychotherapy there is interpretation by the counselor with the goal of helping the counselee gain insight with regard to his own personality trends.

<sup>1</sup> In this chapter, counseling will be used in its original meaning, as given in the dictionary—"to give advice to; to advise, admonish or instruct as a person." In recent years, because the words "counsel" and "counseling" have been used to describe therapeutic work, these terms have taken on somewhat different meaning. Following the publication of C. R. Rogers' *Counseling and Psychotherapy* (Houghton Mifflin Company) counseling has been used with almost precisely an opposite meaning, namely, a form of conference in which no advice of any kind is given but in which the counselor helps the counselee to express himself more freely with a clarification of feeling. However, in this chapter the words "counsel" and "counseling" will be used in their original meaning—to give advice—and the word "psychotherapy" will be used for the more recent nondirective approach.

To summarize, although education and psychotherapy have somewhat the same goals and purposes and may use the same methods, there is a decided difference in the emphasis and relative frequency of use of the various procedures.

### *THREE LEVELS OF PARENTAL ADJUSTMENT*

Determining if in a given case a person (parent) needs education or needs psychotherapy depends not only on whether the aim is to prepare the parent for the future or to correct past mistakes, but also on the level of parental adjustment. The well-adjusted parent, who is free from neurotic trends, who is well balanced and stable emotionally, can profit by education and counseling. Such a parent can take advice and consequently can profit from it. When parents seek assistance with regard to their children's problems it is important to determine the level of adjustment. There is no simple method by which such a diagnosis can be made. A psychiatrist will be able to form a judgment only after an extended consultation. One might determine the nature of the adjustment by using some such diagnostic device as the Rorschach. It has been found that, in general, parent education is most effective with parents with little or no education. When a well-educated person seeks assistance with regard to a child's problems, the chances are that the parent himself has emotional difficulties. The well-educated parent has probably already been exposed to advice and instruction.

On the second level are those parents who are mildly maladjusted and mildly neurotic. Experience has shown that these parents cannot profit by counseling until their emotional difficulties have been resolved by psychotherapy. Time and again child guidance workers have had the experience of giving such parents advice and suggestion, only to be defeated in the results. Changes, although apparently coming more slowly, come more surely through psychotherapy. Strangely enough, educational techniques have been found more successful with foster parents than with own parents, apparently be-

cause foster parents are not so deeply involved emotionally in the problems of their children. This change from education and counsel to psychotherapy as a means of dealing with parents who seek assistance with regard to their children's problems became increasingly clear in the work of the Institute of Child Guidance, an experimental child guidance clinic which operated in New York City in the 1920's. This change to psychotherapy became a movement during the 1930's, and today psychotherapy of parents is an established practice. In the early days there was a tendency to minimize the difficulty of treating emotionally disturbed and neurotic parents. Lack of success with educational methods, however, has convinced child guidance workers that, in the long run, therapeutic methods are more effective.

On the third level are those more seriously maladjusted parents who have serious neuroses or even psychotic trends. There is no doubt that in such cases these parents need psychotherapy as individuals and that they cannot become more effective parents until they become better adjusted persons.

#### PARENT EDUCATION

Parent education had its formal beginning in this country in the establishment in 1888, at the suggestion of Dr. Felix Adler, of a Society for the Study of Child Nature. This society later became the Child Study Association of America and in 1921 embarked on its wider sphere of influence under the direction of Mrs. Sidonie Gruenberg. In 1897 a group of mothers organized what was called at that time the Congress of Mothers. This later became the Congress of Parents and Teachers and has had an important influence on the education of parents. The eminent psychologist of Clark University, G. Stanley Hall, was active in the child study movement in the 1890's and 1900's. However, his approach was primarily one of collecting, with scientific interest and curiosity, data on the activities of children, and he was only secondarily interested in the development of parent education programs.

Another important movement having widespread influence on parent education was the establishment of eighteen research and training centers in Child Development from grants by the Laura Spellman Rockefeller Memorial Fund. Grants have long since been discontinued, but several of the institutes established early in the 1920's are still in existence. The National Council of Parent Education, with seventy constituent member organizations, was established in 1925. This organization has had a profound influence on the stimulation of parent education, and for four years, beginning with 1935, published the *Journal of Parent Education*. A symposium on parent education and psychoanalysis in the third volume, in 1938, undoubtedly had an important influence in bringing to a focus the limitations of parent education as such and in helping to redirect interest toward parent counseling and psychotherapy. The point of view of those interested in parent education may be best seen from a quotation from the 1928 biennial report of the National Council of Parent Education. In this report eleven goals of parent education were listed: (1) to increase in parents the awareness of their opportunities as parents; (2) to enable them to meet a changing world with intelligence and serenity; (3) to induce them to evaluate their experience, motives, behavior, etc., and also their aims in child dealings; (4) to assist them in developing skills and techniques for dealing with situations arising from their functions as parents; (5) to enhance their satisfactions with their job; (6) to aid them in conceiving of the family in terms of continuing adjustments to higher levels, (7) to help them in orienting their family within enlarging contexts of neighborhood, community, nation, world, (8) to furnish them with the knowledge and the means of understanding and offering controls in the evolving problems of growth in themselves and their children; (9) to expand and enrich the total life of the family; (10) to develop in parents a group-consciousness, a sense of membership in a larger community of parents sharing similar experiences, (11) to stimulate the habit of study. This list of

goals is resounding with high ideals, but their implementation in the actual work of parent education failed to meet all these hopes and aspirations.

Parent education in its inception was carried out on a broad front and many of its activities are now firmly established in current practice. Parenthood education has been introduced into high school and college instruction. As preparation for the responsibilities of parenthood this form of education would seem to be of the highest importance, and efforts toward rooting and extending parenthood education in American schools is still going on. State departments of education have seen this as a separate responsibility, and in many states there have been established separate divisions of parent education for fostering and developing classes and study groups for parents and prospective parents. Much work has been done through the extension departments of colleges and universities. Classes in parent education have been set up in churches, in the Y.M.C.A. and the Y.W.C.A., in 4-H Clubs, and in similar organizations.

Among the means available for parent education one of the most common, but by no means most important, is that of lectures in which instruction is given in child psychology and in child care. Reading is a recognized parent education activity, and there is a wealth of printed material for the guidance of parents in dealing with their children. Successful experiments in parent education have been tried on the radio. Exhibits have been set up at fairs and other public gatherings. Of more significance perhaps than the methods already mentioned are conferences and small study or discussion groups. Parent education has also been carried out in conjunction with nursery school programs. Considerable value has been found in permitting parents to observe in the nursery school, as parents can learn much by watching nursery school teachers in their relationships with children. Of greater value is parent participation in the nursery school program. In some schools, for instance, parents have volunteered their services once or

twice a week in the supervision of games and other activities. Of a more intimate nature would be direct assistance to parents in the home by visiting workers who observe and advise on more effective ways of dealing with the problems of the children. Finally, personal counseling is being used more and more with intelligent and well-adjusted parents who can profit by a friendly exchange of points of view with a well-trained and sympathetic counselor.

An evaluation of the outcomes of parent education is somewhat difficult to make. Reports may vary from those in which very promising results have been observed to those that are disappointing. There is no doubt that statistically, when large numbers are taken into account, parent education has a distinct value. On the other hand, if one considers the needs of the individual parent, it may be found that the benefits of parent education are limited and that the real problems are more effectively handled by psychotherapeutic methods. Of the more general outcomes, it has been asserted that there are changes in belief in the direction of expert opinion on the part of those who have attended parent education classes. Parent education leads to increased insight and increased self-reliance for parents. As a result of parent education, children's problems seem to the parents less serious, and emotional attitudes in children become improved.

There is no doubt that information is of value to some parents and in some situations. Rogers<sup>2</sup> makes the point that information is more effective when it is new than when it involves changing an old point of view. Information is of more value when it involves something that the parent has been trying to find out. Information dealing with such definite areas as feeding, the problems with regard to money or the choice of companions, may be assimilated whereas information with regard to problems which involve deeper emotions and are more intimately related to parent-child relationships,

<sup>2</sup> C. R. Rogers, *The Clinical Treatment of the Problem Child*, pp. 186 f. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1939.

such as obedience, sibling rivalry, and the like, may not be assimilated. Rogers suggests that information may be more helpful in reducing marital conflicts when it makes specific suggestions with regard to cooking, budgeting, sex adjustment, and birth control than when it attempts to deal with emotional areas relating to parent-child relationships. Finally, as has already been said, the assimilation of instruction depends on the adjustment of the parents.

More positive claims have been made concerning the value of parent discussion groups. Cushing<sup>3</sup> lists the following values resulting from parent discussion groups: (1) personal assistance; (2) acquisition of knowledge concerning the child; (3) recognition of universality of problems of childhood; (4) relation between child and environment; (5) satisfying family relationships; (6) re-evaluation and new definition of parenthood; (7) marked improvement in parental attitude; (8) acquisition of specific techniques; (9) vital interest and outlet for mother; (10) bringing the home and school into closer relationship; (11) stimulation to do worth-while reading; (12) general consciousness of heightened intellectual activity; (13) new sources of interest in one's husband. This list, although reported as an observation of the result of parent study groups, is a mixture of hopes and results. Certainly these outcomes cannot be counted on in every case, and an actual measure of them would probably indicate that change was considerably below expectation. Another outcome suggested as a result of discussion groups is a change in the attitude toward the instructor, and perhaps this is one of the most certain of the many changes suggested. At any rate, there is evidence that the results on an information test are better after discussion than after lectures.<sup>4</sup> In this connection mention should be made of Pratt's three narratives for use in parent

<sup>3</sup> H. M. Cushing, "Parent Education as a Mode of Mental Hygiene" *Mental Hygiene*, 17 635-641, 1933.

<sup>4</sup> H. S. Schaus, "Experimental Investigation of Methods in Parent Education," in *Researches in Parent Education*, I, Part III University of Iowa Studies in Child Welfare, 6 115-134, 1932.



education groups.<sup>5</sup> These short stories of family episodes, prepared for use in parent discussion groups, were believed at the time to represent a distinct step forward in parent education. Actually their use represents a transition point from a purely instructional approach to the current approach in group psychotherapy. Pratt believed that through the discussion of these family episodes parents could identify themselves with the different family members and thereby work through emotionally some of the problems presented. He also believed that in this process mothers would acquire new perspective and insight with regard to themselves and thereby would acquire new tolerance and understanding of others. Undoubtedly a discussion based on prepared but lifelike material achieves some of these goals, but it cannot stimulate the intensity of emotional response that a discussion of one's own problems might.

Parental observation and participation in nursery school programs have additional values. By observing a nursery school teacher, a mother can learn procedures and techniques which no amount of reading or discussion could quite get across. As an observer, a mother can attain a certain amount of detachment from her child's problems and thereby approach them more objectively when she takes up the responsibility for them again at home. By participation in the nursery school program, a mother can spread over several children the intensity of her feelings and through approaching problems of other children objectively she can learn to take a more objective attitude toward problems of her own child.

Child analysts have been considerably hampered in their work because a mother's attitude can interfere with the progress of the child under analysis. Burlingham<sup>6</sup> suggests that the parent of the child under analysis be taught to observe

<sup>5</sup> G. K. Pratt, *Three Family Narratives for Use in Parent Education Groups: With a Discussion of the Problems of Study Group Leadership*, New York: National Council of Parent Education, 1935.

<sup>6</sup> D. T. Burlingham, "Child Analysis and the Mother." *Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, 4: 69-92, 1935.

the child more objectively, to observe herself and her feelings toward the child, and that she should be prepared for changes in the child and in particular for changes in the child's relationship and attitude toward her. The more modern point of view is to recognize that the mother needs psychotherapy as much as does the child and that the best results can be achieved only when there is simultaneous treatment of the two.

In recent years, with the growing recognition of the importance of an emotional rather than an intellectual approach to the parent's problems, the question has been raised whether the parent educator can at the same time play the role of therapist. In general it is believed that this is difficult, if not impossible, for several reasons. It should be recognized that the study group leader has not been trained in therapeutic techniques. As an instructor he has neither time nor energy to give to parents on a therapeutic basis. Parents in parent education classes are oriented toward a mental rather than an emotional approach. A parent requires special preparation in order to be ready to assimilate psychotherapy. As one writer states,<sup>7</sup> once the worker takes the role of teacher and counselor, he loses the role of therapist. Hill advises the teacher of parents to try to avoid putting parents on the defensive with regard to convictions, standards, or attitudes which relate to the management of children.<sup>8</sup> This word of caution only emphasizes the difficulties of a purely instructional approach and shows the need for therapy in the case of even mildly disturbed parents. The conclusion seems inescapable that a purely instructional approach is not effective with parents who have problems.

Before closing this section, the values of parent education in the broader perspective should be emphasized. As a result of the devastations of two world wars and the greatly increased complexity of our civilization brought about by tech-

<sup>7</sup> D. M. Levy, *Maternal Overprotection*, p. 209 New York: Columbia University Press, 1943.

<sup>8</sup> L. B. Hill, "Psychoanalysis and Parent Learning" *Journal of Parent Education*, III, No. 4 9-12, February 1937.

nological developments, the family has been badly disorganized and dislocated. The breaking up of families has been one of the tragedies of modern life. Since it is not possible to turn back the hands of the clock toward simpler living, hope must be founded on education to re-establish values in the family. With the clearer understanding of the essential factors that constitute good parent-child relationships, education in schools and colleges should be able to provide information and to develop attitudes that will help to give the family in our society a firmer foundation. The remarkable results in public health which have been attained in part through a program of public education indicate what can be expected from an enlightened program of parent and family education in setting higher standards for family life. The further development of parent education, therefore, is essential for the best interests of society.

### *PARENT PSYCHOTHERAPY*

#### DEFINING THE ROLES OF PSYCHOTHERAPIST AND PARENT

If it is decided that psychotherapy and not instruction is required, then this point should be made clear to the parent when first she comes for help. Only too often the roles and the relationships in psychotherapy are never clearly defined. A parent comes expecting advice with regard to her problems but finds that the advice is not forthcoming and so she becomes confused, disappointed, and somewhat angry. The therapist makes a mistake if he feels that it is possible to drift into a therapeutic relationship without coming to an open understanding on the matter. Parents come for help originally as parents and not as persons. The reason for shifting the emphasis and treating the parent as a person should be openly explained so that there is full recognition of the new role on both sides.

A mother coming for help has definite purposes that she

wishes to accomplish. The chances are that she would like to re-establish the mother-infant relationship, in which the child is docile and helpless and the mother's wishes can be exercised at will. Frequently a mother seeks help with regard to discipline and methods of exacting obedience. She wants help from the counselor in re-enforcing her own overprotective or perfectionistic attitudes which have value for her personally and which she does not readily wish to relinquish. If the therapist desires to help both mother and child so that the child's growth and personality can proceed unimpeded, he cannot afford to fall in with the mother's selfish purposes. He must realize that the mother must relinquish some of her wishes if the interests of the child are to be advanced.

It is important to define at the start the roles that both the therapist and the mother are to play. The therapist should point out the purpose of the treatment so that the mother will be helped to see the problem more clearly and to adopt a different attitude toward it. The nature of the problem, namely, difficulties in relationships between parent and child, should be emphasized. The method to be employed should be described as clearly as possible at the start so that the parent will not be disappointed when she is not given advice and progress seems to be slow. The difficulty and length of the task should not be minimized. The mother should be told explicitly that she may have to come in for treatment as often as twice a week for a period of many weeks, possibly for a year or more. A mother should be helped to accept the role as patient at the outset rather than to find that she is expected to fall into such a role after several conferences have been held.

A parent may be expected to show resistance to treatment. She has come in to get help on her child's problems, and it is a wrench to have to shift the focus to herself. Even though the skillful psychotherapist will permit and encourage a mother to talk about her child's problems at first, still it is important that from the start the mother accept her role as

a person being treated. If the mother expresses resistance to the role she is expected to play, the therapist must deal directly with that resistance. He can explain that the child's problems are related to the mother's problems. In many cases this will arouse strong guilt but the discomfort of the guilt may help the mother to accept her role as patient if she feels that that is necessary to bring about improvement of the home situation. A discussion of her fears may help to ease the resistance. The therapist can use his prestige and authority to impress upon the mother the need and the wisdom of pursuing such a course, and he should give every encouragement to her to enter on it. A mother needs to be helped to accept treatment voluntarily rather than to undertake it because of pressure from someone else, perhaps a relative in the home, or because of the authority or the persuasiveness of the therapist.

Child guidance experience shows that some mothers refuse psychotherapy. The threat that they may have to give up some of their own attitudes is too great and they will run away from it. In such cases, rather than revert to didactic and educational procedures, it may be necessary to recommend some sort of environmental change, such as sending the child away to a relative or to summer camp or boarding school, or making some more drastic and permanent change such as placing him in a foster home or institution.

#### TREATABILITY OF PARENT

Rogers<sup>9</sup> mentions three factors which must be taken into account in determining the treatability of a parent. First, he mentions the parent's motive for change. If any thought of change in his own attitudes is intolerable to the parent, the chances for success in psychotherapy are indeed slight. Rogers points out, as a second factor, the degree of emotional need which is revealed by the parental attitudes. If the need is deep-seated and long-standing, then the change will be difficult, but

<sup>9</sup> C. R. Rogers, *op. cit.*, pp 212 f.

if the parent is otherwise well adjusted, with normal outlets for satisfaction, the attitude toward the child may not be tenacious and may be amenable to psychotherapeutic procedures. Rogers mentions as the third factor the parent's learning ability. Parents most susceptible to treatment are those who have the higher I.Q.'s and who have a greater inherent emotional stability.

Rogers suggests that those situations in which there is marital disharmony may yield to change more readily than those in which the primary problem is one of bad parent-child relationship.<sup>10</sup> The insecure parent with feelings of inferiority is more treatable than the parent who is irritable and excitable. Finally, those conscientious parents, burdened with guilt concerning their own inadequacies, are more treatable than parents without this sensitivity of feeling.

On the other hand, parents least susceptible to treatment are those who have the lower I.Q.'s and who are deeply involved emotionally in their family problems. It has been pointed out that less success has been achieved in mother-dominant families, where the father plays a somewhat passive role. In such situations the mother's need to control the child is deep-seated and cannot be modified without intensive psychotherapy. In some cases these mothers will use a child's illness as a defense behind which they hide their own difficulties. Were the child to show improvement, the mother would be thrown back on herself, with a corresponding increase in anxiety. Consequently, in such cases the mother cannot bear to have the child relieved of his problems. Emotionally unstable parents, who are irritable, excitable, and unreasonable, respond poorly to treatment. Similarly, the self-centered and narcissistic parent, with a narrow range of interests which are concentrated largely on her child and his affairs, is difficult to change by therapeutic measures. Were these parents to accept treatment, it should be with the understanding that it must be intensive and protracted.

<sup>10</sup> C. R. Rogers, *op. cit.*, p. 213.

#### DECISION TO SEEK TREATMENT THE FIRST STEP IN THERAPEUTIC PROCESS

In thinking of parent psychotherapy it is easy to overlook some of the simple and yet essential features of the process. The parent's decision to seek aid from an outside source is in itself an encouraging factor. It means that the destructive relationships within the family will be broken into by some outside influence and that the very decision to seek outside help makes a start in reducing the tension which has accumulated. The inclusion of a new relationship between the mother and the therapist is an entering wedge into the relationship between the mother and child. The act of visiting a clinic means that the mother is traveling away from the tenseness and closeness of the relationship which has caused her difficulties. When she brings her child to the clinic and the child goes hand in hand with a worker, the mother has yielded full responsibility for the child and thereby permits herself to relax. So the very decision to seek treatment is itself the first step in the therapeutic process.

#### PURPOSE AND GOAL OF TREATMENT

It is generally recognized that the client and not the therapist must determine the goal of treatment. To be sure, the mother's original aim, namely, to maintain her relationship with her child, is bound to become modified during the process of treatment; but the therapist cannot and should not impose his own values on the mother, but must permit her to work out her own values and goals as the process goes on. Nothing can be accomplished unless it is recognized and admitted that the mother who is considering treatment wants to do the best by her child. It is this fundamental purpose that must be counted on and used as a constructive force in the treatment process.

It also must be recognized that the feelings rather than the behavior of the parent are important. As has been expressed

earlier in this book, what a parent does may be relatively unimportant so long as the parent has constructive feelings. A parent may break many rules of child rearing and yet be a success as a parent if he loves his child and is working wholeheartedly for the child's interests. So the primary goal in psychotherapy is the release of feelings, particularly negative ones, that is, the hostilities, hatreds, and resentments. In most cases the basis of bad parent-child relationships is parental hostility. In the case of the rejecting parent it is openly expressed hostility. In the case of the overprotecting parent it is hostility which operates under a disguise. Expressing the hostility helps to reduce guilt about it, makes the parent less anxious and tense, and permits release of more constructive feelings. The release of repressed feelings enables a parent to see herself in a different light, to tolerate herself, and hence to gain insight. The release of negative feelings permits the expression of more positive feelings. The extent and depth of hostility by no means reveal the capacity for positive feelings. Although one gains a first impression that hostility is overwhelming and all-pervasive, once the hostile feelings have been reduced in intensity the capacity for positive feelings becomes revealed. Being encouraged to express their feelings, parents are thus given opportunity to assume their natural responsibilities without guilt, to make decisions, to become more assertive, to become less fearful. By being permitted and encouraged to express feelings parents are able to express gratifications which hitherto have been repressed.

There has been some debate concerning the extent of the treatment desirable in the psychotherapy of parents. On the one hand, there are those who would confine the therapy to the area of parent-child relationships and would consider that the therapist was going beyond the bounds of the problem were he to deal with other areas and aspects of the parent's life. On the other hand, another point of view insists that, to be at all effective, therapy cannot be confined to a given area. Personality is not broken up into segments and



problems are not confined within watertight compartments. If the attitudes of a parent with regard to a child are to be changed it may be necessary to let the inquiry extend over many phases and aspects of the parent's life and interests. If it is found, as is usually the case, that a parent's feelings do not easily subside when they touch only on attitudes toward a child, it is a sign that these feelings have a wider significance and that until they are released over a wider area modification in the attitudes will not take place. So the second point of view holds that the psychotherapy of parents should go into any and all problems which the parent wishes to bring into the psychotherapeutic sessions even though they seem only remotely related to the problem of the child. The first point of view was held at the beginning of the movement in the psychotherapeutic treatment of parents and continues to be held by workers with limited training and lack of security in their approach. But with growing experience in the field of parent psychotherapy it becomes clear that it is not possible to confine the discussions within the single area of parent-child relationships but that they must be allowed to flood over into many nooks and crannies of the parent's life.

### *DIDACTIC COUNSELING*

Counselors who are untrained or who have had a background in teaching will often proceed with parent counseling by offering direct suggestions and advice. Experience shows, however, that giving advice to parents who are even mildly neurotic is ineffective. These parents clamor for advice and seek to establish a dependent relationship with the counselor, endeavoring to put responsibility for their problems on him. These parents may try to follow advice, but as they do so anxiety increases. Mrs. O comes to the clinic for assistance because her ten-year-old Archie is not making satisfactory progress in school. There is conflict in the home over his homework. Mrs. O has provided Archie with a room of his own, a desk, and a lamp, and definite hours are set

aside both before and after the supper hour for study. Mrs. O flutters about anxiously and offers her assistance in the more difficult exercises in arithmetic and geography. The clinic worker suggests to Mrs. O that she leave Archie alone during the study hour and permit him and the school to take responsibility for his homework. Mrs. O reluctantly agrees to try this method. At the end of a week she returns somewhat tense but asserts that she is following instructions. At the end of the second week, however, she comes in with considerable anxiety. Another unfavorable report has come from the school. Archie, although he sits at his desk, is wasting his time and the mother accuses the clinical worker of failing to understand the problem. She asserts that Archie needs more pressure in order that he may fulfill his school tasks creditably. Such an episode has been repeated scores of times in child guidance work, when an anxious mother has been given advice which runs counter to her wishes and, if followed, only increases her anxiety.

The child senses the artificiality of the mother's attempts to follow the advice given her and the mother's anxiety is communicated to the child. Instead of feeling free to take responsibility for his own progress he becomes enmeshed in his mother's difficulties.

Advice, instead of helping a parent to grow, to become more secure and more and more self-assured, actually makes the parent more dependent, more helpless, and more tense. Advice is seen as a criticism of the mother's previous methods and is interpreted unconsciously as a depreciation of her as a parent, and resentment is aroused which eventually leads to retaliation and counterhostility. When Mrs. O comes back and throws the failure of the method at the clinical worker she is challenging his wisdom and authority. Advice does not help a parent to gain greater insight or a new perspective on her problem and blocks rather than furthers its solution.

A child guidance worker today understands the dangers and liabilities in giving advice to an anxious parent. It is recog-

nized that suggestion of an impersonal kind, perhaps thrown out as an aside, may be somewhat more effective than direct advice. If the suggestion tells how Mrs. P successfully handled a similar problem, or what Mr. Q recommends in his latest book, the parent is given somewhat more latitude in deciding for herself whether she will attempt these measures. However, today the efficacy even of suggestion is doubted. The therapist may tell the parent directly that he does not give advice, saying that it is difficult for an outsider to know the precise conditions in the home well enough to lay down a prescription for action, or even that there are no general rules which are trustworthy in all cases. He may suggest that a plan of procedure will have to be worked out and that the parent is expected to take the major share of the responsibility in forming this plan. Some workers will profit by challenging the mother to consider various plans of action and their possible outcomes, stimulating her to think and feel herself into the situation more objectively. If a parent asks, "Shall I take Johnnie's toys away when he won't eat his dinner?" the worker may answer, "Let's see, suppose you do take his toys away, what will that do to Johnnie?"<sup>11</sup>

The modern clinical worker recognizes that advice is ineffective when the worker does not understand the motives back of the mother's attitude. Rather than to give suggestions and advice, it is necessary to deal with the anxiety back of the mother's demand for advice. If a parent wants advice with regard to giving her child an allowance, fearing that whatever is given to the child is spent right away, so that the child saves nothing and is constantly demanding more, the worker should inquire into the anxiety which underlies the parent's demand for help. Or if a mother hesitates to let a child go to school alone for fear of possible accident or injury, the worker must attempt to get at the root of the mother's fear. To attempt to deal with the mother's problems on the basis of advice is to

<sup>11</sup> D. W. Baruch, *Parents and Children Go to School*, p. 95. Chicago: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1939.

deal with them symptomatically. A more fundamental approach is to attempt to get at the feelings and motivations which underlie the parent's difficulties with the child.

Just as the giving of advice and the making of suggestions have been found to be ineffective, so more aggressive methods which counselors sometimes use fail equally to get to the root of the problem. It is not possible to help parents with problems by challenging their pride or appealing to their conscience. These bootstrap methods of attempting to change the attitudes of parents may only make matters worse. It is not possible to effect helpful change in a parent's attitude by charging her with prejudice or with unhealthy attitudes or by threatening her with the possibility that, if new ways are not attempted in the home, the child will turn out to be abnormal or delinquent. This will only add to a mother's fright and will repress her hostility even deeper and in the long run will make matters worse. Against such challenges the mother must protect herself, and to the extent that she dares to do so she will find methods of counterattack or of complete withdrawal from the situation. A worker who uses such methods is only confusing the issue by injecting into the situation his own personal problems—his hostilities and prejudices. A problem in human relations is never solved through attacks by one person on another. Such methods, which may be not uncommonly found in conferences of parents with teachers or school principals, find no place in modern psychotherapy.

#### PSYCHOTHERAPEUTIC METHODS

The basis on which psychotherapy rests is a *relationship* between the therapist and the parent. When the parent first comes for help she comes to a person who has been recommended to her as an expert, competent to give her the help which she needs. She comes with confidence in him, this confidence deriving from the recommendations of her friends. The relationship on the part of the mother is one of confidence and trust. The therapist may increase this confidence

by assuring the mother that she has come to the right place, that he is skilled in helping parents with problems of this kind, that he is a person on whom she can depend. The relationship on the part of the therapist should be one of *accepting*. Modern psychotherapy is founded on a relationship in which the therapist accepts both in principle and in feeling the person whom he is treating. Acceptance means that he adopts a noncritical attitude, that he has respect for the person as a parent, that he understands her difficulties, that he can sympathize with the methods that she has attempted. The therapist identifies himself with the parent to the extent that he is able to put himself in her place, feel her feelings, and think her thoughts. He meets the parent where she is and not where he thinks she ought to be. He reassures the mother that her feelings are natural and that they are to be expected under the circumstances. The therapist does not hold up to her standards of perfection or goals from which he feels the mother has fallen short. If he tries to define to her what he considers desirable, he loses an opportunity of learning what the mother is feeling and thinking.

The therapist not only is accepting but is also *permissive*. He permits the mother to continue as she is and does not try to impress her with the fact that she ought to change her attitudes and become a person different from what she now is. He permits the mother to express herself freely and without criticism from him and does not try to argue or disagree with her point of view. During the therapeutic sessions there is a minimum of direction on the part of the therapist, who lets the mother carry the discussion where she will. In the third place, the therapist shows *confidence* in the mother. He believes that she has possibilities of working out her problem successfully. He also believes that her deepest motives are constructive and wholesome, and that if a mother can be helped to express her feelings more completely, the negative feelings will become less intense and positive feelings and attitudes will seek more open expression.

Reassurance is a method which psychotherapists sometimes employ. For instance, it is common practice to help a parent to sense the universality of her problem. She is not alone, for many other parents have struggled with the same problems and many of them have met them successfully. Reassurance, however, should be recognized for what it is, as a temporary and palliative measure which does not have profound psychotherapeutic value. Reassurance may allay anxiety and so may be necessary in order that the parent can think and feel with less urgency and with less intensity on present difficulties; but reassurance has only temporary value and does not help to effect any fundamental change in parental attitude or insight.

The basic work in psychotherapy is the encouragement of a freer expression of feeling. The therapist's efforts are directed throughout toward encouraging the parent to express herself with less repression and more fully and freely. There is an attempt to encourage the parent to elaborate her feelings and to express them in all their ramifications. It is believed that attitudes are changed only through the expression of feeling. Rogers,<sup>12</sup> in a discussion of development of insight, states that insight comes as feelings, particularly negative ones, are released, and that such release enables a person to reorganize his values and attitudes. Attitudes do not change in a vacuum or by an abstract consideration of issues. Attitudes change only in an actual experience where feelings are aroused and released, permitting a reorganization of the expressive forces within the individual.

Because the therapist's main task is to encourage the freer expression of feeling, he apparently pays little attention to factual material. This point is often misinterpreted. It does not mean that the therapist ignores factual material. He certainly pays attention to it and makes a mental note of names and dates and episodes that the parent relates. His main attention, however, is directed toward the feelings that the parent

<sup>12</sup> C. R. Rogers, "The Development of Insight in a Counseling Relationship," *Journal of Consulting Psychology*, 8: 331-341, November 1944.

shows when she relates her experiences and episodes; for his main purpose is clarification of these feelings for the parent.

The worker, therefore, listens more than anything else. Instead of displaying his authority and telling the parent the latest expert opinion with regard to methods of child rearing, he devotes his attention to an assimilation of the parent's motives and feelings. This does not mean that the therapist adopts a purely passive role. He is active in his assimilation of the moving panorama of the parent's moods and he is also active in his attempts to encourage her to a fuller and broader expression of feeling. There is no attempt on his part to minimize unpleasant and negative feelings. Rather, he helps the mother to express them more fully, to feel less guilty about them, and to accept them as natural and inevitable in the situation. He helps the mother to accept her attitude of disliking the child. In particular, the therapist helps the mother to mobilize, elaborate, repeat, and develop into fullness of expression her hostility toward the child. He listens to repetitions of the mother's descriptions of the child's symptoms and difficulties. He encourages the mother to tell of the child's progress and of the child's failure to make progress. As the negative feelings find fuller expression and spread over a wider area in the parent's life, they lose their intensity and permit the gradual expression of more positive feelings of liking, tolerance, and responsibility.

The therapist does not hurry this procedure. Although the negative will inevitably come out, there is no attempt to force the parent to talk about things of which she feels guilty. If a topic arouses too great discomfort and anxiety it can be omitted for the time being, or the nature of the fear can be gone into directly. The experienced therapist does not hurry a discussion of a topic for which the parent is not prepared.

Inevitably in any therapeutic process the hostilities will move from their original target, which, in the case of the mother, is the child, to other targets, particularly the therapist and the parent herself. After her original awe of the

therapist is blunted, the mother will dare to show her dissatisfaction with him. She will criticize him for his failure to be more directive. She will become discouraged at the slow progress of the treatment. She will minimize his skill and in many subtle and insidious ways will displace her hostility onto the therapeutic relationship, which, in turn, will help to absorb some of these more difficult feelings to the extent that the therapist will accept them without counterattack. The mother may also be helped to become aware of her feelings by having them pointed out to her, and the skillful therapist, by sensing and anticipating her hostile feelings toward him, may be able to blunt them by commenting on them.

It is commonly thought that this emphasis on feelings in the therapeutic treatment makes it an unnatural and unrealistic experience. As a matter of fact, a good therapist endeavors to keep a sense of reality. If the mother asks a direct question for information, she deserves an equally direct answer. The therapist tries always to be open and aboveboard and to help the parent to see things clearly and realistically.

There is considerable confusion as to the meaning and the place of interpretation in psychotherapeutic work. Because interpretation is one of the main procedures in psychoanalysis some have assumed that the therapist is expected to interpret and explain the mother to herself. There are, however, several misconceptions with regard to interpretation which may cause difficulty. As noted earlier, the therapist's principal task is to help to clarify feelings and relationships by pointing them out as they occur during the counseling hour. When these feelings are pointed out they may serve as a basis for discussion and ordinarily should stimulate the parent to fuller and freer expression. Every interpretation should be based on statements and facts given by the parent and not on deductions and constructions of the therapist. The therapist only explains to the mother in perhaps clearer terms what she has already been trying to express with confusion and ramblings.

The therapist in interpreting should be careful not to go



beyond the mother's capacity for acceptance. This requires judgment on his part and some trial and error. Only on the basis of experience can a therapist learn how far to go in a given situation. One aim in the treatment is to connect the present with the past. It is not believed that by tracing a feeling to its origin the feeling is thereby dissipated. But it is believed that as various areas of life become more closely integrated a fuller expression becomes possible, repressions are dissolved, and reorganization of attitudes occurs. If the parent talks only of her difficulties in the present situation she may be encouraged to talk about her past, and vice versa, if she insists on confining her conversation to past experiences she may be encouraged to discuss her present problems. Always the therapist should attempt to point out similarities between the parent's present situation and the experiences that she has had in the past. The mother should learn to discover these relationships for herself and should be encouraged to tie experiences together independently. After all, the therapist can only start the process which the mother must carry through on her own initiative to completion.

Whether or not one should interpret unconscious motives is debatable. This writer feels that opinions on this question differ in part because of professional prerogatives. As is well known, however, unconscious motives influence all behavior and all personality trends have unconscious origins. Consequently, in any form of therapy, it is impossible to avoid dealing with unconscious processes. One rule is to accept the effect of unconscious processes as they show themselves in expressed behavior and fantasy but to avoid probing into their origins until these origins reach open expression. To interpret the unconscious foundation of behavior is to make a person feel attacked, as indeed he probably is if the unconscious motive is one which the person himself condemns. This sort of attack, by revealing unconscious motives, makes a person less communicative and retards rather than accelerates the therapeutic process.

Further, the therapist should avoid putting the mother on the defensive by diagnostic labeling and description. It only arouses resentment and increases resistance when a therapist tells a mother that she is insecure, that she is jealous of her child's development, that she is repeating sibling rivalry from her own childhood, and so on. These diagnostic labelings and abstract generalities, instead of encouraging fuller expression on the part of the parent, only arouse resentment and protective repressive measures.

Finally, it does not help to interpret the child to the neurotic mother. To do so only helps the mother to avoid sensing her own feelings more clearly and fully. If the parent were being treated on a purely intellectual basis, helping the parent to see the child's motives could then be used by the mother in an intellectual manner. This may be accomplished later, when the mother's own emotional problems have been resolved; but while the mother's problems are mainly emotional she should be helped principally to gain insight with regard to her own problems.

Every therapist encounters what has been technically termed *resistance*, namely, the reluctance of a client to proceed in the elaboration of feelings. Instead of expanding on how she feels toward her child and on her problems a mother will tend to confine her discussion to less unpleasant topics. Resistance takes many forms. Withdrawal sometimes leads not only to slowing up the therapeutic process itself by long pauses, but to failure to meet at the appointed hour or to actual absences from the therapeutic sessions. There are many other tricks and dodges which a person can employ to avoid further elaboration of unpleasant material. Resistance is the name for the various devices that a client uses to protect herself from the pain and anxiety which is aroused by too full and premature a confrontation of her unconscious motives. Rogers<sup>18</sup> believes that resistance is the result of the therapist's proceeding too rapid-

<sup>18</sup> C. R. Rogers, *Counseling and Psychotherapy*. Boston: Houghton Mif-

ly and making premature judgments and unwarranted interpretations.

Resistance is handled by interpreting it, that is, by pointing out its presence and nature and by encouraging the client to discuss it freely. The discomfort and unpleasantness itself must be faced before other feelings can receive full expression. For instance, if a mother begins to hesitate in her discussion, if she fails to meet her appointments regularly or even misses them altogether, the therapist may wish to discuss the mother's feelings and encourage her to tell of her boredom, her feelings of discouragement, her helplessness with regard to finding a solution to her problems, and of the anxiety and guilt which are aroused by continued discussion of them. Only as these feelings can be brought out into the open and thoroughly aired will the resistance be lessened so that further progress in the discussion of the parent's problems can be resumed. Throughout, the therapist must be unhurried and should never try to force a decision or to crash his way through a barrier which is raised.

As a result of such a process of elaboration and clarification of feelings insight will be gained. Insight means a new pattern or organization of attitudes. What before looked difficult or impossible now becomes acceptable and tenable. It should be recognized, however, that intellectual appreciation and emotional appreciation are not the same thing. It is possible for a parent to gain considerable intellectual insight without a corresponding emotional appreciation. A parent may learn to explain a situation verbally and apparently understand it, yet fail to react to it differently when next confronted by it. Intellectual insight has value therapeutically only by clarifying and tying up the emotional reorganization. Treatment is effective only to the degree that the emotional change takes place. Insight does not take place at one time and in one act, for changes take place gradually. Insight must encompass all phases of a parent's relation to a child. A mother must be helped to feel more comfortable with her

child with regard to eating and sleeping, school and companions, possessions, and relations between siblings. Each of these apparently has to be worked out separately, and the change in attitude with regard to each of these items takes place separately. Even in the later stages of therapy a parent may have difficulty in accepting her negative feelings along with the growing positive feelings, and the therapist must even there be ready to help her to verbalize her ambivalence.

As feelings are accepted it is possible for the parent to turn her thoughts more objectively to her problems, to work out plans, and to put the plans into execution; but the intellectual approach to her problems can take place only when she is emotionally ready for them.

Therapy is never a one-way process. There are continual advances and relapses. As new problems arise the parent must learn to master each one as it comes up, and so her strength will increase by slow degrees.

### GROUP TREATMENT

The preceding discussion has been based on the assumption that one parent at a time is being treated by a therapist. In recent years there has been experimentation with the treatment of parents in groups. This is not to be confused with parent study groups, which have an instructional rather than a therapeutic aim. The process and methods of group psychotherapy are distinct from parent education. The aim and process of group therapy are identical with the aim and process of individual therapy. Indeed group therapy as such does not exist. All therapy must be the therapy of the individual; but it is possible for individual therapy to be carried on in groups, thereby making for some saving in time and effort on the part of the therapist.

Group therapy has certain values as well as certain limitations which are not found in individual therapy. The principal limitation in group therapy is the dilution of the relationship. The therapist, instead of giving his entire attention to

one person, must spread it among several persons, and as a result the intensity of the relationship is diminished. However, this may also have a positive aspect if a parent is to any degree frightened by a relationship which is too intense and exclusive. Through the more gradual introduction into the group, she may be helped to accept a relationship with the therapist. In the group there is a reduction of guilt, since a mother finds that she is not alone in having problems with her children, that other parents are experiencing the same kind of difficulties. In reaching this conclusion she is helped to become more tolerant of her child's behavior because she finds that children in other families present similar problems. She also is helped to compare her child with more realistic standards of children as they actually are, rather than with the ideal child which existed only in her imagination. The group helps to distribute love and hate. Her hostile feelings can be displaced toward more persons and thereby be dissolved the more readily. In the group new relationships are stimulated and this helps in the establishment of new interests, thus reducing the feeling of isolation and encouraging the feeling of sharing. These new relationships are of a constructive nature and help further to break down the previous unfortunate relations between parent and child. These new relationships help the parent to discover that friendliness is not a threat and that her hostile feelings can be tolerated and are not utterly dangerous. Finally, the group stimulates emotional release. As a mother finds other mothers in the group talking about their experiences, she is stimulated to recount her own, and this mutual stimulation facilitates the process of psychotherapy. The mothers may react to one another as siblings in a family react in the presence of a parent figure.

In the group situation the therapist plays the same role that he plays in individual therapy. His main task is to encourage the release and elaboration of feelings. The therapist has no urge to express himself and adopts an attitude of waiting for members of the group to start the ball rolling. Even in the

group situation the therapist deals with individuals, and is held back in giving attention to individuals only to the extent that the cohesion of the group structure is jeopardized. For instance, in the group the therapist has an additional responsibility of protecting its members from threats that might be more than they could tolerate. If one mother attacks another mother and criticizes her too harshly, the therapist may have to step in in order to protect the woman who is being attacked from more criticism than she can tolerate. Consequently, the therapist must be ever aware of the responses of each member of the group to hostile attacks from another. The more the members of the group are able to talk to one another, the less active the therapist need be until finally his presence seems almost unnecessary. However, even in the group situation the help comes mainly from the relationship with the therapist, who, as always, is accepting and permissive, and encourages freer expression. To a more limited degree, however, mothers may act as therapeutic agents to one another, helping and encouraging expression of feelings from one another.

In group therapy there are special problems which have to be considered. One important problem concerns the stability of the group. The group process is based in part on the permanence of the group during the period of treatment. If the group changes its membership at each session there cannot be the following-through of relationships which is essential for the most effective results. There are also problems relating to difficulties characteristic of any group situation, such as failure to stick to a point, the tendency of some individuals to usurp all the time for themselves, and similar problems. One measure of the effectiveness of group therapy is the growth of the demand for individual psychotherapy. As mothers begin to sense the extent to which problems with regard to their children are based on problems within themselves, they feel the need for a form of therapy which is more intensive than that which can be provided in the group.

*RELATION OF MOTHER'S IMPROVEMENT  
TO FATHER*

It has been learned from the experience of therapists that when one member of a family improves certain new difficulties within the family structure may be created. It has been found that in certain cases, as psychotherapeutic treatment helps the mother to adopt new attitudes toward her family, the attitudes of the father in the family may grow worse. He may find it difficult to accept the mother's change and improvement, and as the mother changes for the better he may introduce new problems into the family situation. Originally, as the mother's hostility is directed toward the child, the father may occupy the position of the favored sibling in the family. But as the mother becomes better able to accept her feelings toward her child and consequently becomes more accepting of him, the father feels that his position in the family is threatened, and he may react to this growing insecurity by regressive behavior of his own. This is particularly true when the mother has been overprotective and dominant and the father has occupied a more passive role in the family. In this family situation the father has played the role of a more or less helpless and dependent child. As the need of the mother to be dominant recedes, the father feels threatened in his role of dependency and may react to the new state of affairs by various kinds of rebellion and childishness. This points to the necessity of at least superficial interviews with the father, if for no other reason than to increase the father's prestige and to help him to accept the changing relationships within the family.

In cases where the father is the dominating figure in the family, treatment of the mother may be relatively ineffective because the father's role may be a determining factor in the child's problems. If the father's role in the family is neurotically determined, the situation is difficult to treat. However, if the father plays a dominant role because he believes it is

culturally expected of him, or if he puts pressure on a child in order to compensate for his own unfulfilled ideals and ambitions, it is possible to help him to readjust in the situation through a more instructional and didactic approach.

### *THE THERAPIST*

A word should be said about the person who is to play the role of therapist in the psychotherapy of parents. A therapist should always be a person with warm and sensitive feelings and spontaneous sympathy for the difficulties of others. It is not possible for a person to put on an accepting and permissive attitude, as one puts on clothing, to be adopted for the situation. The successful therapist must be a person who naturally likes other people, who can feel himself in their place and can identify himself with them in their problems. However, the therapist is also a human being with all the range of emotions that everyone else has. He must be aware of his own feelings so that he can keep them under the necessary control. In particular, when the stage of the therapy comes in which the mother tends to belittle him in his efforts, to become discouraged with the progress being made, to blame him for her own failures, he must be able to accept such challenges and threats without the necessity of making counterattacks on the one hand, or of taking too self-protective an attitude on the other, or of passing them off as of no account. Therapists must be in a position to withstand all kinds of impacts that may emerge in the therapeutic process. The skill of the therapist depends upon many things besides his understanding of the dynamics of human behavior. He must be sensitive to every change of mood in the parent whom he is treating. He must be sensitive to the emergence of resistance. He must have a keen appreciation of the mother's limit of acceptance and must know which feelings she is ready to accept and which are still too painful for her. He must be able to understand the mother's point of view by identifying himself with her without becoming emotionally involved. If



one follows recent psychological movies one gets the impression that in every psychiatric treatment the psychiatrist becomes emotionally involved with his patient. This, however, is a travesty on the treatment process and is introduced into the motion picture in order to make a dramatic story. Actually, to the extent that the therapist becomes involved emotionally in the relationship he compromises his own chances of success. The therapist should have a deep respect for the integrity of the parent whom he is attempting to help. He must believe that her deepest motives are honest and positive and that fundamentally she wishes the best for her child. The therapist must have intimate knowledge of the mechanisms of adjustment. He must know when to be active and when to be passive. Finally the therapist must recognize psychopathic and psychotic trends and must be alert to the presence of organic symptoms. To the extent that he is not medically trained he should be ready and willing to seek the help of someone who is so trained and is competent to deal with symptoms of a pathological nature.

### *SUMMARY*

This chapter has reviewed current methods of helping parents to become more effective as parents. Before problems arise, the well-adjusted person who is free from neurotic tendencies can be helped by instructional means, that is, by imparting information and by giving advice to the extent that it is demanded. Most parents, however, who have difficulty in the upbringing of their children are also themselves struggling with problems of adjustment and are to a mild or severe degree themselves neurotic. Before they can be helped directly with their children's problems they themselves require psychotherapeutic help. The principles and processes of psychotherapy as seen in most modern practice have been reviewed and summarized. In a few words it can be stated that the main aim in psychotherapy is to help an individual to accept himself more fully and to become more self-directing.

and secure in his relations with others. This is accomplished by permitting and encouraging the individual to a fuller expression of feelings which, after their release, lose their intensity and sanction more constructive feelings and attitudes to find expression. This process takes place through the help of the therapist, who is accepting of the whole range of feelings which a parent may express. To the degree that emotional problems are resolved, parent-child relationships can be established on a more constructive and objective basis.

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BARUCH, D. W. *Parents and Children Go to School*. Chicago: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1939.

This book, written in the author's incomparable style, has become a classic. Part II discusses parent education. One chapter reports a parent discussion group, and contains excellent suggestions in regard to the point of view the effective leader should hold. Another chapter discusses a conference with a parent and comes close to approximating the present-day psychotherapeutic point of view. Still other chapters discuss the value to parents of observing and participating in nursery school education.

BARUCH, D. W. "Aggression During Doll Play in a Preschool." *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 11 252-260, 1941.

Described in this paper is the aggressive play of young children with doll figures. This is the first discussion of play of this kind by a psychologist in this country.

BARUCH, D. W. *Parents Can Be People*. New York: D. Appleton-Century Company, 1944.

Here is a popular book discussing the attitudes of parents toward children and offering suggestions as to the effect of these attitudes on the growing child.

BARUCH, D. W. and WILCOX, J. D. "A Study of Sex Differences in Preschool Children's Adjustment Coexistent with Interparental Tensions." *Journal of Genetic Psychology*, 64 281-303, 1944.

This is a repetition of Baruch's doctoral study, but carried out under more carefully controlled conditions and more effective interviewing methods. The results are not strikingly different from the original but emphasize afresh the importance of harmonious interpersonal and sexual relations between parents for the most helpful atmosphere for the development of a child's personality.

BENDER, LAURETTA. "Behavior Problems in the Children of Psychotic and Criminal Parents." *Genetic Psychology Monographs*, Vol. 19, No. 2, pp. 229-339, 1937.

Findings from the author's long experience as psychiatrist in Bellevue Hospital, New York City, are presented in this monograph.

BENDER, LAURETTA and RAPOPORT, JACK. "Animal Drawings of Children." *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 14 521-527, 1944.

The authors point out that animal fantasies of children refer not only to fear of a parental figure but also to admiration of the strength and agility of a parental figure.

BERNARD, V. W. "First Sight of the Child by Prospective Parents as a Crucial Phase in Adoption." *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 15 230-237, 1945.

This paper includes a discussion of factors that may cause prospective foster parents to reject a potential foster child.

BLANCHARD, PHYLLIS. "Interpreting Psychological Data to Parents." *Journal of Consulting Psychology*, 4 120-123, 1940.

Blanchard emphasizes the fact that it is more important to help the parent to recognize his own feelings toward the child than to try to interpret the child to the parent. The author believes it is futile to report to a parent the clinician's deductions concerning the causes of a child's behavior, particularly when the parent is largely responsible for the behavior.

BLOS, PETER *The Adolescent Personality*. New York. D. Appleton-Century Company, 1941.

Blos points out in this book some of the difficulties that arise from strained parent-child relationships in adolescence.

BOWLBY, JOHN. "The Influence of Early Environment in the Development of Neurosis and Neurotic Character" *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 21 154-178, 1940.

Here is a helpful paper by an English psychiatrist, based largely on results of his own experience and observation

BRIDGMAN, RALPH P. and others "Parent Education and Psychoanalysis—a Symposium." *Parent Education*, Vol III, No. 4, pp 3-25, February 1937. Bridgman planned this symposium which introduced a new note into the thinking of the National Council of Parent Education

BRILL, A A *Psychoanalysis* Philadelphia W. B Saunders Company, 1917

In this book there is a good chapter on the psychology of the only child

BRONNER, E B. "Can Parents' Attitudes Toward Their Problem Children Be Modified by Child Guidance Treatment?" *Smith College Studies in Social Work*, 7 1-16, 1936.

BROWN, W. P. "The Family Neurosis" In R. G. Gordon, ed., *A Survey of Child Psychiatry*. New York Oxford University Press, 1939

BURGUM, MILDRED. "Constructive Values Associated with Rejection." *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 10 312-327, 1940.

This paper finds some positive values associated with parental rejection.

BURGUM, MILDRED. "The Father Gets Worse A Child Guidance Problem." *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 12 424-486, 1942.

The author reports the interesting phenomenon that as a mother improves as a result of therapeutic treatment, the father not uncommonly develops difficult symptoms as a result of his feeling that he has become displaced from his pre-eminent position in the family.

BURLINGHAM, D. T. "Child Analysis and the Mother" *Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, 4 69-92, 1935

The writer discusses the problems relating to the mother's attitude when her child is undergoing analysis. From the present-day point of view, suggestions made for helping the mother to accept and tolerate the analyst's work and the changes in her child seem particularly old-fashioned

CAMPBELL, A. L. "The Personality Adjustments of Only Children." *Psychological Bulletin*, 31 193-203, 1934.

Here is an excellent review and summary of studies and discussions concerning the personality of the only child.

CHILDERS, A. T. "Hyperactivity in Children Having Behavior Disorders." *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 5 227-243, 1935.

Childers finds a relationship between hyperactivity in children and their rejection by their parents

CLOTHIER, FLORENCE. "Psychological Implications of Unmarried Parenthood." *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 13:531-549, 1943.

CLOTHIER, FLORENCE. "The Treatment of the Rejected Child" *Nervous Child*, 3:89-110, 1944.

CUSHING, H. M. "Parent Education as a Mode in Mental Hygiene." *Mental Hygiene*, 17:635-641, 1933.

DAVIS, ALLISON and DOLLARD, JOHN. *Children of Bondage*. Washington, D. C. American Council on Education, 1940.

DAVIS, E. A. and MCGINNIS, ESTHER. *Parent Education*. Child Welfare Monograph Series, No. 17. Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1939.

This bulletin represents the point of view of orthodox parent education.

DAVIS, KINGSLEY. "The Sociology of Parent-Youth Conflict." *American Sociological Review*, 5:523-535, 1940.

DEUTSCH, HELENE. *The Psychology of Women*. Volume II, *Motherhood*. New York: Grune & Stratton, 1945.

This second volume of Deutsch's discussion of the psychology of women describes with great insight and detail the variety of basic attitudes of the mother at all stages of motherhood. Especially to be commended are Chapter IX, dealing with "The Mother-Child Relation," and Chapters X, XI, and XII, dealing with "Unmarried Mothers," "Adoptive Mothers," and "Stepmothers," respectively.

DUBOIS, CORA. *The People of Alor*. Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1944.

The author, an anthropologist, presents in this study of the primitive people on the island of Alor, a thoroughgoing description of the process of growing up. Parental discipline in this society is highly inconsistent, and the author points out the effects of this parental inconsistency on the personality of the children.

DURKIN, H. C., GLATZER, H. T., and HIRSCH, J. S. "Therapy of Mothers in Groups." *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 14:68-76, 1944.

Three workers in the New Rochelle Child Guidance Clinic report on their experiences in the psychotherapy of mothers in groups.

ENGLISH, O. S. and PEARSON, G. H. J. *Common Neuroses of Children and Adults*. New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1937.

In the introductory chapters of this comprehensive handbook of children's behavior disorders the authors point out certain important factors of parent-child relationships.

ENGLISH, O. S. and PEARSON, G. H. J. *Emotional Problems of Living; Avoiding the Neurotic Pattern*. New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1945.

This latest book by the above two authors is addressed primarily to teachers, social workers, parents, and other non-medically trained persons. It presents facts regarding the development of children in terms of psychoanalytical stages of development and includes many observations on the influence of parental attitudes in these different stages.



FERENCZI, SÁNDOR "The Unwelcome Child and His Death Instinct." *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 10 125-129, 1929

Ferenczi here discusses in highly psychoanalytic verbiage the relationship between parental rejection and aggressiveness in children.

FIELD, MINNA. "Maternal Attitudes Found in 25 Cases of Children With Primary Behavior Disorders" *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 10 293-311, 1940.

The author finds that twenty-three of the twenty-five children whom she included in this study "suffered rejection by one or both parents"

FISHER, M S "Parent Education" *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, 11 573-576, 1933

This is an authoritative statement concerning the history and present status of organized parent education

FITZ-SIMONS, M. J. *Some Parent-Child Relationships as Shown in Clinical Case Studies* Contributions to Education, No 643 New York Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1935

A doctoral dissertation which reports an analysis of cases on file in the archives of the National Committee for Mental Hygiene, this is one of the early quantitative and documented studies of parent-child relationships

FLUGEL, J D *The Psychoanalytic Study of the Family* The International Psychoanalytical Library, No 3 London Hogarth Press, 1921.

This early contribution to psychoanalysis is noteworthy because for the first time the importance of love and hate attitudes and tendencies toward domination and submission by parents, and the influence of these attitudes on children, are pointed out.

FOLSOM, J. K. *The Family*. New York John Wiley and Sons, 1934

Folsom makes a fourfold classification of "bad parents": (1) those who overlove and overcontrol, (2) those who overlove but undercontrol, (3) those who underlove but overcontrol, and (4) those who underlove and undercontrol.

FREUD, ANNA and BURLINGHAM, D. T. *War and Children* New York: International Universities Press, 1943

The rich experience of these authors in the Hempstead Nurseries in the care of children who were separated from their families permitted them to make many significant observations of child development which they report in this little volume. This book is an example of the good results gained when analytically trained persons have the opportunity to observe many children in a residential situation

FREUD, SIGMUND *Three Contributions to the Theory of Sex*. Nervous and Mental Disease Monograph Series, No. 7. New York: Nervous and Mental Disease Publishing Company, 1910.

FREUD, SIGMUND. *The Interpretation of Dreams*. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1913, 1937.

FREUD, SIGMUND. *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* The International Psychoanalytical Library, No. 4. London: Hogarth Press, 1923.

FREUD, SIGMUND. *New Introductory Lectures in Psychoanalysis*. New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1933. Also published in *The International Psychoanalytical Library*, No. 24. London: Hogarth Press, 1933.

FREUD, SIGMUND. *The Problem of Anxiety*. New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1936. Also published under the title of *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety*. *The International Psychoanalytical Library*, No. 28. London: Hogarth Press, 1936.

All things being considered, the references to the significance of parent-child relationships occur relatively infrequently in Freud's writings. He seems to be aware of the threat to security in overprotection and also in the loss of parental love, but on the whole Freud is not highly sensitive to variations in parental attitudes and their effect on a child's behavior and personality. Freud's contribution consists in outlining some of the main dynamic factors which operate in the human economy, and he has left it to his successors to discover how these apply in the varieties of human relationships.

FRIEDLANDER, KATE. "Anti-Social Character." *The Psychoanalytic Study of the Child*, Vol. I, pp. 189-203. New York: International Universities Press, 1945.

The anti-social character is found in a defective superego growing out of inconsistent parental attitudes.

FRIES, M. E. "Psychosomatic Relationships Between Mother and Child." *Psychosomatic Medicine*, 6: 157-162, 1944.

Evidence is here presented to indicate that infants are born showing differences in general activity and that these differences arouse differences in the responses of mothers toward them. This factor may account, in part, for the direction of mother-child relations in the first days of a newborn child's existence.

GARRETT, ANNETTE. "Attitude Therapy." Pages 36-40 in E. R. Groves and Phyllis Blanchard, eds., *Readings in Mental Hygiene*. New York: Henry Holt & Company, 1936.

Presented in this chapter is a brief, succinct statement of the principles underlying John Levy's therapeutic methods in dealing with mothers.

GARTLAND, RUTH. *Psychiatric Service in a Children's Hospital*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1936.

GIBLETTE, C. T. and MACRAE, ANNABELLE. "An Experiment in the Treatment of Feeding Problems Through Parental Education." *Mental Hygiene*, 18: 92-108, 1934.

GLEASON, M. C. "A Study of Attitudes Leading to the Rejection of the Child by the Mother." New York: Institute for Child Guidance, 1929. Abstracted in *Smith College Studies in Social Work*, 1: 407, 408, 1931.

This is one of the early studies emanating from the Smith College School of Social Work and dealing with the etiology of maternal rejection.

GLUECK, BERNARD. "The Significance of Parental Attitudes for the Destiny of the Individual." *Mental Hygiene*, 12: 722-741, 1928.

This article is noteworthy because it clearly foreshadows some of the later clinical and experimental findings concerning parent-child relationships.

- GOLDFARB, WILLIAM "Infant Rearing and Problem Behavior." *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 13 249-266, 1943

The author has had an opportunity to make comparisons of the development and personality of children reared in institutions with those reared in foster homes. This study deals with the personalities of younger children and the following study, with adolescents. He finds that institutional rearing of children is detrimental to their personality development.

- GOLDFARB, WILLIAM. "The Effects of Early Institutional Care on Adolescent Personality" *Journal of Experimental Education*, 12 106-129, 1943

Goldfarb reports here the characteristics of the adolescent personality of boys and girls who have been reared in institutions. He makes vivid the stultifying and dulling effect on personality that results from the impersonal care received by young children in institutions.

- GOLDFARB, WILLIAM "Psychological Privation in Infancy and Subsequent Adjustment" *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 15 247-255, 1945

This very significant paper shows the differences in the personalities of deprived children growing up in an institutional setting as contrasted with rejected children in a home situation.

- GREENACRE, PHYLLIS "Conscience in the Psychopath" *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 15 495-509, 1945.

Here is an authoritative discussion of the meaning of psychopathy and some of the dynamic factors underlying the psychopathic personality.

- GRIEG, A. B. "The Problem of the Parent in Child Analysis." *Psychiatry*, 3 539-543, 1940

This paper should be considered with that by Burlingham as representing a discussion of the problems faced by the child analyst concerning the attitude of the mother toward the treatment and changes in the child. This writer, like Burlingham, discusses handling the mother on the basis of suggestion and prescription.

- GROVES, E. R. "Parent Education." In *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 160 216-222, 1932.

- GRUENBERG, S. M., chairman. Report of the Subcommittee on Types of Parent Education, Content and Method. White House Conference on Child Health and Protection. *Parent Education. Types-Content-Method*. New York. The Century Company, 1932.

This White House Conference report has been for many years a valued sourcebook on methods and programs in parent education.

- HATTWICK, B. W. "Interrelations Between the Preschool Child's Behavior and Certain Factors in the Home." *Child Development*, 7 200-226, 1936.

- HATTWICK, B. W. and STOWELL, MARGARET. "The Relation of Parental Over-attentiveness to Children's Work Habits and Social Adjustments in Kindergarten and the First Grade of School." *Journal of Educational Research*, 30 169-176, 1936.

The study reported here deals with the kindergarten and elementary grades of the Winnetka Public Schools. The authors present in clear-cut fashion the influence on children of parental overprotection.

176      *The Dynamics of Parent-Child Relationships*

HEALY, WILLIAM and BRONNER, A. F. *New Light on Delinquency*. New Haven Yale University Press, 1936.

Out of their long clinical experience these writers present with great emphasis the role of emotional insecurity in producing delinquency.

HEALY, WILLIAM, BRONNER, A. F., and BOWERS, A. M. *The Structure and Meaning of Psychoanalysis*. New York Alfred A. Knopf, 1930.

The authors present a compendium of psychoanalytic theory which forms a valuable reference book in the field of parent-child relationships.

HEATH, ESTHER. *Approach to the Parent* New York The Commonwealth Fund, 1933

The treatment of the four cases here reported was frankly experimental. Each case was handled by a different method and it is clear that the author grew as a result of her own experience. However, the very candidness of the discussion is illuminating and helpful.

HEDRICK, B. E. "The Effectiveness of a Program of Learning Designed to Change Parental Attitudes Toward Self-Reliance" In *Researches in Parent Education, III*, Part VI University of Iowa Studies in Child Welfare, 10:249-268, 1935.

HILL, LEWIS BROWN. "Psychoanalysis and Parent Learning." *Parent Education*, Vol. III, No. 4, pp. 9-12, February 1937.

One of the series in the symposium on Parent Education and Psychoanalysis, this paper sets forth important principles to guide the counselor. Unfortunately, however, the paper is addressed to leaders of study discussion groups and fails to go the whole way in terms of the psychotherapy of parents

HINKLE, BEATRICE. *The Re-creating of the Individual*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1923.

Writing from the point of view of Jung, Hinkle discusses the influence on the child of a denial of parental love. Actually Hinkle tends to minimize the importance of parent-child relationships. At the same time this book is a very early statement of the possibility that parental attitudes may influence the personalities of children

HORNEY, KAREN. "Maternal Conflicts" *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 3:455-463, 1933.

Here is a very significant paper, filled with important suggestions concerning the etiology of parental attitudes toward children.

HUSCHKA, MABEL. "Psychopathological Disorders in the Mother." *Journal of Nervous and Mental Disorders*, 94:76-83, 1941.

In this study, the author shows that, of 488 mothers of problem children, 203, or 41.6 per cent, were suffering from psychopathological conditions

ISAACS, SUSAN. *Social Development of Young Children*. New York. Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1933.

Isaacs stresses the importance of parental firmness as well as parental love. She emphasizes particularly the threat to the child whose parent tends to overindulge him. She points out how such a child is at the mercy of his own sadistic fantasies which he tends to fear because external controls are absent.

JONES, ERNEST. "The Phantasy of the Reversal of Generations." Chapter 28 in *Papers on Psychoanalysis*, Fourth Edition. Baltimore: William Wood and Company, 1935.

This paper is noteworthy because the author is one of the first to recognize that parental attitudes toward the children go back to attitudes which the parents in childhood had toward their own parents.

KANNER, LEO. "The Role of the School in the Treatment of Rejected Children." *Nervous Child*, 3: 236-248, 1944.

Kanner points out how rejecting parents try to influence others to reject the child.

KASANIN, J. S., KNIGHT, ELIZABETH, and SAGE, PRISCILLA. "The Parent-Child Relationship in Schizophrenia." *Journal of Nervous and Mental Disorders*, 79: 249-263, 1934.

In this study of schizophrenia in children the authors note that in sixty per cent of the cases the children were overprotected when very young. They tend to see parental attitudes as an important etiological factor in the development of schizophrenia. In this paper David Levy's analysis of maternal overprotection is given considerable prominence by the authors.

KASANIN, J. S., SOLOMON, JOSEPH, and AXELROD, PEARL. "Extrinsic Factors in the Treatment of Anxiety States in Children." *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 12: 439-456, 1942.

KLEIN, MELANIE and RIVIERE, JOAN. *Love, Hate and Reparation*. Psychoanalytical Epitomes, No. 2. London: Hogarth Press, 1937.

In Mrs. Klein's essay on love and reparation we have some profound analyses of the influence parents have on children through the attitudes which they adopt toward them. The author of the present book has drawn on this essay also for his analysis of marital relationships. Mrs. Klein tends to see adult attitudes as repetitions of attitudes adopted in similar situations in childhood.

KNIGHT, R. P. "Some Problems Produced in Selecting and Rearing Adopted Children." *Bulletin of the Menninger Clinic*, 5: 65-74, 1941.

KNIGHT, R. P. "Behavior Problems and Habit Disturbances in Pre-Adolescent Children: Their Meaning and Management." *Bulletin of the Menninger Clinic*, 8: 188-199, 1944.

Here is a very good survey of children's problems and their possible dynamic meanings.

KOLODNEY, ETTA. "Treatment of Mothers in Groups as a Supplement to Child Psychotherapy." *Mental Hygiene*, 28: 437-444, 1944.

LAFORE, G. G. *Practices of Parents in Dealing with Preschool Children*. Child Development Monographs, No. 31. New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1945.

Carried out by observation of parents and children in the home, this careful study is a contribution to our growing knowledge of parent-child relationships. Carefully recorded observations are analyzed in considerable detail. The values of the study are limited, however, because the author has directed her attention primarily to negative parental practices and has failed to record the somewhat more subtle positive emotional attitudes. The study

would be of more value had the author dared to go beyond her observations to a discussion of the feelings which underlie the observed behavior and the meaning of the behavior to both parent and child

LEE, P. R. and KENWORTHY, M. E. *Mental Hygiene and Social Work* New York The Commonwealth Fund, 1929

Chapters in this book by Dr. Kenworthy are among the most enlightening in the early literature on the importance of security through parent-child relationships

LEVINE, MAURICE *Psychotherapy in Medical Practice* New York The Macmillan Company, 1942

Chapter 10, "Basic Attitudes Toward Children," pp 250-272, and Chapter 11, "The Problems of Parents and Children," pp 273-282, are excellent. They contain common-sense advice and an interpretation of parent-child relationships and the attitude of the good parent

LEVY, D. M. "A Method of Integrating Physical and Psychiatric Examinations, with Special Studies of Body Interest, Overprotection, Response to Growth and Sex Difference" *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 9 (Old Series 86): 121-194, 1929.

Here is the earliest published statement of David Levy's point of view with regard to maternal overprotection.

LEVY, D. M. "Paper on Maternal Overprotection." Read before the Second Colloquium on Personality Investigation *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 9 (O. S. 86): 900-904, 1930

In this paper David Levy first describes the conditions which arouse maternal anxiety and lead to maternal overprotection.

LEVY, D. M. "Maternal Overprotection and Rejection." *Archives of Neurology and Psychiatry*, 25 886-889, 1931

David Levy here presents his first systematic discussion of his concepts of maternal overprotection and rejection. Levy has had profound influence in steering thinking and research on problems of parent-child relationships.

LEVY, D. M. "On the Problem of Delinquency." *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 2 197-211, 1932

In this paper David Levy points out how delinquency is frequently caused by rejection by the father and overprotection by the mother, a combination which he apparently discovered independently of Aichhorn.

LEVY, D. M. "On the Problem of Delinquency" Section 4 in "Psychiatry and the Court" in the 1932-1933 Yearbook of the National Probation Association, pp. 95-110 New York National Probation and Parole Association, 1933

LEVY, D. M. "Relation of Maternal Overprotection to School Grades and Intelligence Tests." *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 3: 26-34, 1933.

Here David Levy reports his observations which led him to conclude that overprotected children do better in school than their intelligence test scores would indicate. In general they are better in language activities than in number activities and they develop a fondness for reading. Levy explains these facts as being due to the emphasis on regularity and drill by parents who overprotect their children.

- LEVY, D. M. "Attitude Therapy." *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 7 103-113, 1937.

This is David Levy's statement concerning principles and methods of psychotherapy which he subsumed under the heading "Attitude Therapy" Levy's point of view does not differ in essential respects from other variants of the modern point of view of psychotherapy which puts the emphasis on the acceptance of the patient and the encouragement of the patient to express feelings.

- LEVY, D. M. "Primary Affect Hunger" *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 94 643-652, 1937.

- LEVY, D. M. "Maternal Overprotection" *Psychiatry*, 1 561-591, 1938, 2 99-128, 563-597, 1939, 3 393-438, 1941

This series of papers constitute the chapters of the book which subsequently was published under the title, *Maternal Overprotection*

- LEVY, D. M. *Maternal Overprotection* New York Columbia University Press, 1943

David Levy sets forth in considerable detail his findings and theories with regard to maternal overprotection. He discusses the origin and background of overprotection in the mother, the varieties of expression of this attitude, and its effect on children. One chapter discusses the treatment of parents. Levy is very blunt in stating that psychotherapy is without value unless the parent accepts the role of patient. Levy recommends more drastic environmental shifts and changes where the parent has no access to therapeutic treatment.

- LEVY, JOHN. "Relationship Therapy." *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 8 64-69, 1938.

This is the only statement left by John Levy in regard to the type of therapy which he called "Relationship Therapy." Through his teaching and example John Levy had an important influence on the individual and group methods of psychotherapy with parents.

- LEVY, JOHN and MUNROE, RUTH. *The Happy Family*. New York. Alfred A. Knopf, 1938

In this very readable book the significance of parental attitudes is clearly presented.

- LEWIS, MARGARET. "How Parental Attitudes Affect the Problem of Lying in Children." *Smith College Studies in Social Work*, 1 403-404, 1930.

Lying is related to parental rejection in this study.

- LINDEMAN, E. C. and THURSTON, F. M., eds. "Problems for Parent Educators." From *Biennial Report of the National Council of Parent Education*, 1928. New York National Council of Parent Education, 1929.

- LODGEN, PEARL. "Some Criteria for the Treatment of Mothers and Children by a Child Guidance Clinic" *Smith College Studies in Social Work*, 7 302-324, 1937.

- LOUTTIT, C. M. *Clinical Psychology* New York Harper and Brothers, 1936.

- LOWREY, L. G. "Trends in Therapy: Evaluation, Status and Trends." *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 9 669-705, 1939.

Serving as the chairman of a round table on trends in therapy, Lowrey makes

an authoritative statement summarizing the points of view and present status of therapeutic methods. He also includes a brief history of parent education.

LOWREY, L. G. "Personality Distortion and Early Institutional Care." *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 10 576-585, 1940.

Lowrey's paper should be consulted along with those of Goldfarb on the influence of institutional care on personality development.

LOWREY, L. G. "Group Treatment for Mothers." *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 14 589-592, 1944.

Lowrey summarizes present developments in the group treatment of mothers at the Brooklyn Child Guidance Clinic.

LURIE, O. R. "Psychological Factors Associated with Eating Difficulties in Children." *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 11 452-466, 1941.

This study shows how children's difficulties are found to be related to disorganized home conditions, characterized particularly by domestic discord. In many cases the mother is described as being immature, while in others the father plays an ineffectual and undependable role in the family.

MACDONALD, M. W. "Criminally Aggressive Behavior in Passive, Effeminate Boys." *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 8 70-78, 1938.

This very stimulating paper indicates how effeminacy in boys is related to the dominating tendencies of the mother.

MASLOW, A. H. and MITTELMAN, BELA. *Principles of Abnormal Psychology*. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1941.

Chapter 16 in this book, "Origins of Psychopathology in Parent-Child Relations," is a good comprehensive statement.

MENNINGER, K. A. "Somatic Correlations with the Unconscious Repudiation of Femininity in Women." *Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease*, 89:514-527, 1939.

MENNINGER, W. C. "The Emotional Factors in Pregnancy." *Bulletin of the Menninger Clinic*, 7 15-24, 1943.

MOORE, KATHARINE. "A Specialized Method in the Treatment of Parents in a Child Guidance Clinic." *Psychoanalytic Review*, 21 415-424, 1934.

One of the first discussions of parent psychotherapy, this paper stresses the importance of clarifying the role of the parent as a patient rather than permitting a series of interviews to drag along without clear understanding of what is being undertaken and of the nature of the changes which are to take place.

MOORE, M. A. "The Treatment of Maternal Attitudes in Problems of Guidance." *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 3 113-127, 1933.

This is a discussion of problems of the social worker in the treatment of mothers. While this paper is challenging and is written with authority based on experiences, it contains cautions and some of the fears which characterized earlier work in this area.

MORGAN, J. J. B. *The Psychology of the Unadjusted School Child*. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1937.

MOWRER, O. H. and KLUCKHOHN, CLYDE. "Dynamic Theory of Personality." Chapter 3 in J. McV. Hunt, ed., *Personality and the Behavior Disorders*, Vol. I. New York: The Ronald Press, 1944.



- MUELLER, D. D. "Paternal Domination Its Influence in Child Guidance Results" *Smith College Studies in Social Work*, 15 184-215, 1945
- NEWELL, H. W. "The Psychodynamics of Maternal Rejection" *The American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 4 387-399, 1934
- NEWELL, H. W. "A Further Study of Maternal Rejection." *The American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 6 576-589, 1936
- Thus and the preceding paper are noteworthy in that they represent the first attempt to study through the systematic collection of data the influence of parental attitudes on the behavior and personality of children. The statistical presentation is somewhat inadequate, but the main conclusions seem to be sound.
- NITZBERG, EDYTHE. "Modification of Parental Attitude as a Requisite for Success in Child Guidance." *Smith College Studies in Social Work*, 15 131, 132, 1944
- OBENDORF, C. P. "Child-Parent Relationship." Paper in Lorand Sándor, ed., *Psychoanalysis Today*. New York: Covici, Friede, 1933, pp. 117-131. Also New York: International University Press, 1944
- A very penetrating paper by a practicing psychoanalyst.
- ORR, D. W. "Pregnancy Following the Decision to Adopt" *Psychosomatic Medicine*, 3 441-446, 1941.
- PAVENSTEDT, ELEANOR and ANDERSEN, IRENE. "The Uncompromising Demand of a Three-Year-Old for a Real Mother" *The Psychoanalytic Study of the Child*, Vol. I, pp. 211-232. New York: International Universities Press, 1945.
- PLANT, J. S. *Personality and the Cultural Pattern*. New York: The Commonwealth Fund, 1937.
- Plant emphasizes the point that parents must accept a child for what he is rather than for what he can do, and that by adopting this attitude they give the child his basic security. In the school, however, according to Plant, children must be considered from the point of view of their adequacy as well as of their security. These distinctions are most challenging, and have clarified some of the thinking in this field.
- POWDERMAKER, FLORENCE and GRIMES, L. I. *Children in the Family: A Psychological Guide for Parents*. New York: Farrar and Rinehart, 1940
- A most sympathetic discussion of the influence that parents have in building security in children is presented in this handbook for parents.
- PRATT, G. R. *Three Family Narratives for Use in Parent Education Groups: With a Discussion of the Problems of Study-Group Leadership*. New York: National Council of Parent Education, 1935
- These three narratives have had considerable influence in the introduction of case material into parent education groups. In the monograph there is helpful treatment of the therapeutic values of group discussion.
- PRICHARD, ELINOR and OJEMANN, R. H. "An Approach to the Measurement of Insecurity." *Journal of Experimental Education*, 10 114-118, 1941.
- PRUETTE, LORINE. *The Parent and the Happy Child*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1932.
- This handbook for parents tends to be somewhat didactic.

- RADKE, M. J. *Relation of Parental Authority to Children's Behavior and Attitudes*. Institute of Child Welfare Monograph Series, No. 22. Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1946.
- RADO, SÁNDOR. "An Anxious Mother: A Contribution to the Analysis of the Ego." *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 9: 219-226, 1928.
- REYNOLDS, BERTHA C. "Some Proposed Distinctions Between Educational Counselling and Case Work." *Parent Education*, Vol. II, No. 1, pp. 6-11, April 1935.
- RHEINGOLD, H. L. "Interpreting Mental Retardation to Parents." *Journal of Consulting Psychology*, 9: 142-148, 1945.  
Here is an excellent paper on the methods of dealing with the parents of a mentally retarded child.
- RHINEHART, J. B. "Some Effects of a Nursery School-Parent Education Program on a Group of Three Year Olds." *Journal of Genetic Psychology*, 61: 153-161, 1942.
- RHINEHART, J. B. "A Comparative Evaluation of Two Nursery School-Parent Education Programs." *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 36: 309-317, 1945.
- RIBBLE, M. A. "The Significance of Infantile Sucking for the Psychic Development of the Individual." *Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease*, 90: 455-463, 1939.
- RIBBLE, M. A. "Disorganizing Factors of Infant Personality." *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 98: 459-463, 1941.
- RIBBLE, M. A. *The Rights of Infants*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1943.

This is one of the significant contributions during recent years to the psychology of parent-child relationships. The author had the opportunity of observing several hundred newly born infants and was able to relate the developmental tendencies in the child to the mother's attitude toward the child and her method of handling and care. Some of the conclusions seem to be dogmatic and one is asked to trust the judgment of the investigator as to certain physiological processes which she believes to be taking place. On the whole, however, the study presents direct observations, and therein lies its value.

- RIBBLE, M. A. "Infantile Experience in Relation to Personality Development." Chapter 20 in J. McV. Hunt, ed., *Personality and the Behavior Disorders*, Vol. II. New York: The Ronald Press, 1944.
- RICKMAN, JOHN, ed. *On the Bringing Up of Children*. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, and Company, 1936.  
Several chapters in this book pertain to parent-child relationships. Chapter I, "Planning for Stability," by E. F. Sharpe, contains many insightful observations from the experience of this psychoanalyst. Chapter II, "Weaning," by Melanie Klein, emphasizes the importance of certain factors in the first year of life. Chapter IV, "Questions and Answers," by Nina Searl, discusses what to tell the child in response to his questions about the facts of life. Two chapters by Susan Isaacs, Chapter V, "Habit," and Chapter VI, "The Nursery as a Community," deal with the constructive attitudes which

parents may adopt from the point of view of desirable personality development.

ROBBINS, L. L. "Suggestions for the Psychological Study of Sterility in Women." *Bulletin of the Menninger Clinic*, 7 41-44, 1943.

ROCKWELL, A. J. "Therapy for Mothers Runs Parallel with Treatment for Children." In *Psychotherapy for the Exceptional Child*. Proceedings of the Institute for Child Research Clinic of the Woods Schools, November 1943.

ROGERS, C. R. *Clinical Treatment of the Problem Child*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1939.

Chapter VII in this book, dealing with family attitudes as a focus of treatment, is an excellent discussion and summary of the problems of parent education and the psychotherapeutic methods of changing parental attitudes.

ROGERS, C. R. *Counseling and Psychotherapy*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1942.

This book has had a profound influence on the thinking and practice of psychologists in counseling. Rogers recommends a non-directive approach. To use the terminology of the present book, Rogers has helped psychologists to turn from counseling to psychotherapy in aiding people who come for help with problems.

ROGERS, C. R. "The Development of Insight in a Counseling Relationship." *Journal of Consulting Psychology*, 8 331-341, 1944.

Here Rogers elaborates his thesis that insight comes about through the release and acceptance of hitherto unexpressed feeling and that interpretations by a therapist do not hasten the process of gaining insight.

ROSS, ELIZABETH HEALY. "Some Effects of Psychoanalysis on Counseling." *Parent Education*, Vol. III, No. 4, pp. 12-17, February 1937.

This is another paper by a psychoanalyst in the symposium on Parent Education and Psychoanalysis. It contains some excellent advice and suggestions on avoiding interpretations of unconscious material before the client is prepared for them. This paper again would limit parent counseling to some of the more superficial relationships. It represents the attitude currently expressed by psychoanalysts that there is a distinction between intensive and less intensive psychotherapy. Recent discussions, however, have blasted this separation and many of Ross's points are no longer to be taken seriously.

SCHAUS, H. S. "Experimental Investigation of Methods in Parent Education." In *Researches in Parent Education*, I, Part III. University of Iowa Studies in Child Welfare, 6. 115-134, 1932.

SCHUMACHER, H. C. "Contribution of the Child Guidance Clinic to the Problem of Mental Deficiency." *American Journal of Mental Deficiency*, 50. 277-283, 1945.

The problem of helping the parent of the mentally deficient child is again discussed.

SEWALL, MABEL. "Some Causes of Jealousy in Young Children." *Smith College Studies in Social Work*, 1.6-22, 1930.

Jealousy in young children is related to attitudes of their parents in this paper.

SILBERPFENNIG, JUDITH. "Mother Types Encountered in Child Guidance Clinics." *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 11 475-484, 1941.

Here is a discussion of hostility and anxiety on the part of mothers with regard to their children. The author suggests that hostility toward a child is a displacement of earlier feelings of a mother toward her own parents or siblings. The anxious mother is projecting onto her children some of her own earlier feelings, particularly fears of injury or death.

SPIRZ, R. A. "Hospitalism. An Inquiry into the Genesis of Psychiatric Conditions in Early Childhood." *The Psychoanalytic Study of the Child*, Vol. I, pp. 53-74. New York: International Universities Press, 1945.

In this report a comparison is made of institutionally reared children who have and who have not had the benefits of a mother's care. Psychological advantages are found in those children who had at some time been under the care of their own mothers.

STAYER, NANCY. "The Use of a Child Guidance Clinic of Mother-Dominant Families." *Smith College Studies in Social Work*, 14 367-388, 1944.

STEIN, L. H. "A Study of Overinhibited and Socialized-aggressive Children, Part II. A Qualitative Analysis of Background Factors." *Smith College Studies in Social Work*, 15.124, 125, 1944.

STRAGNELL, GREGORY. "Relationship of Anxiety to Solitude." Paper read at the midyear meeting of the American Psychoanalytic Association, December 27, 1925. Abstracted in *The Psychoanalytic Review*, 13 345, 346, 1926.

This very short communication relates anxiety in the child to overprotection on the part of the parent.

SYMONDS, P. M. *The Psychology of Parent-Child Relationships*. New York: D. Appleton-Century Company, 1939.

Two investigations are presented here. (1) comparison of the personalities of accepted and rejected children, and (2) comparison of the personalities of children of dominating and of submissive parents. There is an extensive review of studies in this area. Later chapters of the book deal with the etiology of parental attitudes and extension of the findings to pupil-teacher and counselor-client relationships.

SYMONDS, P. M. *The Dynamics of Human Adjustment*. New York: D. Appleton-Century Company, 1946.

The author in this book has made a systematic presentation of the dynamic principles affecting adjustment and personality. The book should be used as a reference to clarify concepts in the present book.

SZUREK, STANISLAUS, JOHNSON, ADELAIDE, and FALSTEIN, EUGENE. "Collaborative Psychiatric Therapy of Parent-Child Problems." *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 12.511-517, 1942.

The authors discuss problems that arise when mother and child are being simultaneously treated by different workers.

THOM, D. A. *Habit Clinics for the Child of Preschool Age*. Publication No. 135 of the Children's Bureau, U. S. Department of Labor. Washington, D. C., 1924.

- TOWLE, CHARLOTTE. "Symposium: The Treatment of Behavior and Personality Problems in Children. B. The Social Worker." *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 1 21-38, 1930.
- TRAVIS, LEE and BARUCH, D. M. *Personal Problems of Everyday Life*. New York: D. Appleton-Century Company, 1941.
- This sound and very readable book on mental hygiene gives proper emphasis to the importance of acceptance in family relationships.
- UPDEGRAFF, RUTH. "Recent Approaches to the Study of the Preschool Child, III. Influence of Parental Attitudes Upon Child Behavior." *Journal of Consulting Psychology*, 3 34-36, 1939.
- WASHBURN, R. W. *Re-education in a Nursery Group; a Study in Clinical Psychology*. Monograph of the Society for Research in Child Development, IX, No. 2, Serial No. 38. Washington, D. C. Society for Research in Child Development, National Research Council, 1944.
- Washburn discusses the problem of parental education from her vantage point in the nursery school. This monograph is noteworthy because Washburn has made the threefold distinction between normal, mildly disturbed, and seriously disturbed parents, a point of view that has also been used in the present book.
- WATSON, J. B. *Psychological Care of Infant and Child*. New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1928.
- Today this book by the originator of the behaviorist school of psychology is a museum piece. Watson takes an extreme point of view in suggesting that parents inhibit all show of affection toward their children. Watson's advice seems pernicious in the light of present-day knowledge concerning the importance of parental love.
- WICKES, F. G. *The Inner World of Childhood*. New York: D. Appleton-Century Company, 1927.
- Here is another early discussion of the influence of parental attitudes on child personalities. This discussion, from the Jungian point of view, deals with family relationships much as does the present book, without over-emphasizing the sex aspect, as is so often done in Freudian literature.
- WICKMAN, K. M. and LANGFORD, W. S. "The Parent in the Children's Psychiatric Clinic." *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 14:219-225, 1944.
- This thoroughgoing discussion of the problems of the treatment of parents by psychotherapeutic methods emphasizes the importance of the mother's decision to come for treatment as a first step in the treating process itself.
- WILLIAMS, F. E. "What Are Parents For?" *Survey*, 57 307-309, 335, 1926.
- This is a good article on the popular side.
- WOLBERG, L. R. "The Character Structure of the Rejected Child." *Nervous Child*, 3 74-88, 1944.
- The author of this paper presents a very informative discussion of the reactions of children to parental rejection.
- YOUNG, KIMBALL. "Parent-Child Relationship—Projection of Ambition." *Family*, 8 67-73, 1927.
- Here is a classic discussion of the projection of parental ambition onto children.

ZACHRY, C. B. *Emotion and Conduct in Adolescence*. New York D. Appleton-Century Company, 1940.

The author presents an extended discussion, with illustrations, of various attitudes that adolescents adopt toward their parents and of the parents' responses to them. A number of well-known family attitudes not discussed elsewhere are mentioned.

ZILBOORG, GREGORY "Depressive Reactions Related to Parenthood." *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 10 (O. S. 87) 927-962, 1931.

ZILBOORG, GREGORY. "Sidelights on Parent-Child Antagonisms." *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 2 35-43, 1932.

This and the preceding paper by Zilboorg are among the most important in the literature on the etiology of parental attitudes. Writing from the point of view of a clinical psychoanalyst, Zilboorg is able to present many illustrations showing the background of the attitudes which parents take toward their children.

ZIMMERMAN, A. C. "Parental Adjustment and Attitudes in Relation to the Problems of Five- and Six-Year-Old Children" *Smith College Studies in Social Work*, 1:406, 1930

This study points out the etiological background of aggression and timidity in children.

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